



Spectrum's

A brief history of

# MODERN INDIA



## MODERN INDIA

### CHAPTER 1

#### The Revolt of 1857

The revolt of 1857 was a product of the character and policies of rule. The cumulative effect of British expansionist policies, economic exploitation and administrative innovations over the years had adversely affected the positions of all— rulers of Indian states, sepoys, zamindars, peasants, traders, artisans, pundits, maulvis, etc. The simmering discontent burst in the form of a violent storm in 1857 which shook the British empire in India to its very foundations. The causes of the revolt emerged from all aspects— socio-cultural, economic and political—of daily existence of Indian population cutting through all sections and classes. These causes are discussed below.

#### ECONOMIC CAUSES

The colonial policies of the East India Company **destroyed the traditional economic fabric** of the Indian society. The peasantry were never really to recover from the disabilities imposed by the new and a highly unpopular revenue settlement (see chapter on "Economic Impact of British Rule in India" for details). Impoverished by **heavy taxation**, the peasants resorted to loans from moneylenders/traders at usurious rates, the latter often evicting the former on non-payment of debt dues. These moneylenders and traders emerged as the new landlords. While the scourge of indebtedness has continued to plague Indian society to this day.

British rule also meant **misery to the artisans and handicraftsmen**. The annexation of Indian states by the Company cut off their major source of patronage. Added to this, British policy **discouraged Indian handicrafts and promoted British goods**. The highly skilled Indian craftsmen were forced to look for alternate sources of employment that hardly

#### A Brief History of Modern India

existed, as the destruction of Indian handicrafts was not accompanied by the development of modern industries. Karl Marx remarked in 1853: "It was the British intruder who broke up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning-wheel. England began with depriving the Indian cottons from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons.

Zamindars, the traditional landed aristocracy, often saw their land rights forfeited with frequent use of a quo warranto by the administration. This resulted in a loss of status for them in the villages. In Awadh, **the storm center of the revolt, 21,000 taluqdars had their estates confiscated** and suddenly found themselves without a source of income, "unable to work, ashamed to beg, condemned to penury". These dispossessed taluqdars seized the opportunity presented by the sepoy revolt to oppose the British and regain what they had lost.

The ruination of Indian industry increased the pressure on agriculture and land, the lopsided development in which resulted in pauperization of the country in general.

#### POLITICAL CAUSES

The East India Company's **greedy policy of aggrandizement** accompanied by **broken pledges and oaths resulted** in loss of political prestige for it, on the one hand, and caused suspicion in the minds of almost all ruling princes in India, on the other, through such policies as of 'Effective Control', 'Subsidiary Alliance' and 'Doctrine of Lapse'. The right of succession was denied to Hindu princes. The house of Mughals was humbled when on **Prince Faqiruddin's death in 1856**, whose succession had been recognized conditionally by Lord Dalhousie. Lord Canning announced that the next prince on succession would have to renounce the regal title and the ancestral Mughal palaces, in addition to renunciations agreed upon by Prince Faqiruddin.

The collapse of rulers—the erstwhile aristocracy—also The Revolt of 1857 adversely affected those sections of the Indian society which derived their sustenance from cultural and religious pursuits.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE CAUSES

**Rampant corruption in the Company's** administration, especially among the police, petty officials and lower law courts, and **the absentee sovereignty character** of British rule imparted a foreign and alien look to it in the eyes of Indians.

#### SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CAUSES

**Racial overtones and a superiority complex** characterized the British administrative attitude towards the native Indian population. The activities of Christian missionaries who followed the British flag in India were looked upon with suspicion by Indians. The **attempts at socio-religious reform** such as abolition of sati, support to widow-remarriage and women's education were seen by a large section of the population as interference in the social and religious domains of Indian society by outsiders. These fears were further compounded by the **Government's decision to tax mosque and temple lands and legislative measures**, such as the **Religious Disabilities Act, 1856**, which modified Hindu customs, for instance declaring that a change of **religion did not debar a son from inheriting the property of his heathen father**.

#### INFLUENCE OF OUTSIDE EVENTS

The revolt of 1857 coincided with certain outside events in which the British suffered serious losses—the **First Afghan War (1838-42)**, **Punjab Wars (1845-49)**, **Crimean Wars (1854-56)**, **Santhal rebellion (1855-57)**. These had obvious psychological repercussions.

#### DISCONTENT AMONG SEPOYS

The conditions of service in the Company's Army and cantonments increasingly came into conflict with the religious beliefs and prejudices of the sepoys. **Restrictions on wearing caste and sectarian marks** and secret rumors of **proselytizing**

activities of chaplains (often maintained on the Company's expenses) were interpreted by Indian sepoys, who were generally conservative by nature, as interference in their religious affairs. To the religious Hindu of the time, crossing the seas meant loss of caste. In 1856 Lord Canning's Government passed the General Service Enlistment Act which decreed that all future recruits to the Bengal Army would have to give an undertaking to serve anywhere their services might be required by the Government. This caused resentment.

The Indian sepoy was equally unhappy with his emoluments compared to his British counterpart. A more immediate cause of the sepoys' dissatisfaction was the order that they would not be given the foreign service allowance (Matta) when serving in Sindh or in Punjab. The annexation of Awadh, home of many of the sepoys, further inflamed their feelings.

The Indian sepoy was made to feel a subordinate at every step and was discriminated against racially and in matters of promotion and privileges. The discontent of the sepoys was not limited to matters military; it reflected the general disenchantment with and opposition to British rule. The sepoy, in fact, was a 'peasant in uniform' whose consciousness was not divorced from that of the rural population. "The Army voiced grievances other than its own; and the movement spread beyond the Army", observes Gopal.

Finally, there had been a long history of revolts in the British Indian Army—in Bengal (1764), Vellore (1806), Barrackpore (1825) and during the Afghan Wars (1838-42) to mention just a few.

**BEGINNING AND SPREAD** The reports about the mixing of bone dust in ratta (flour) and the introduction of the Enfield rifle enhanced the sepoys' growing disaffection with the Government. The cartridge of the new rifle had to be bitten off before loading and the grease was reportedly made of beef and pig fat. The Army The Revolt of 1857

administration did nothing to allay these fears, and the sepoys felt their religion was in grave danger.

The greased cartridges did not create a new cause of discontent in the Army, but supplied the occasion for the simmering discontent to come out in the open. The revolt began at Meerut, 58 km from Delhi, on May 10, 1857 and then, gathering force rapidly, soon embraced a vast area from the Punjab in the north and the Narmada in the south to Bihar in the east and Rajputana in the west.

Even before the Meerut incident, there were rumblings of resentment in various cantonments. the 19th Native Infantry at Berhampur, which refused to use the newly introduced Enfield rifle and broke out in mutiny in February 1857 was disbanded in March 1857. A young sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry, Mangal Pande, went a step further and fired at the sergeant major of his unit at Barrackpore. He was overpowered and executed on April 6 while his regiment was disbanded in May. The 7th Awadh Regiment which defied its officers on May 3 met with a similar

fate. And then came the explosion at Meerut. On April 24, ninety men of 3rd Native Cavalry refused to accept the greased cartridges. On May 9, eighty-five of them were dismissed, sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and put in fetters. This sparked off a general mutiny among the Indian soldiers stationed at Meerut. The very next day, on May 10, they released their imprisoned comrades, killed their officers and unfurled the banner of revolt. They set off for Delhi after sunset. In Delhi, the local infantry joined them, killed their own European officers including Simon Fraser, the political agent, and seized the city. Lieutenant Willoughby, the officer-in charge of the magazine at Delhi, offered some resistance, but was overcome. The aged and powerless Bahadur Shah Zafar was proclaimed the emperor of India.

Delhi was soon to become the centre of the Great Revolt and Bahadur Shah, its symbol. This spontaneous raising of the last Mughal king to the leadership of the country was a recognition of the fact that the long reign of Mughal dynasty

## 6 A Brief History of Modern India

had become the traditional symbol of India's political unity. With this single act, the sepoys had transformed a mutiny of soldiers into a revolutionary war, while all Indian chiefs who took part in the revolt hastened to proclaim their loyalty to the Mughal emperor.

Bahadur Shah, after initial vacillation, wrote letters to all the chiefs and rulers of India urging them to organize a confederacy of Indian states to fight and replace the British regime. The entire Bengal Army soon rose in revolt which spread quickly. Awadh, Rohilkhand, the Doab, the Bundelkhand, central India, large parts of Bihar and East Punjab shook off British authority.

The revolt of the sepoys was accompanied by a rebellion of the civil population, particularly in the north-western provinces and Awadh. Their accumulated grievances found immediate expression and they rose en masse to give vent to their opposition to British rule. It is the widespread participation in the revolt by the peasantry, the artisans, shopkeepers, day laborers, zamindars, religious mendicants, priests and 'civil servants which gave it real strength as well as the character of a popular revolt. Here the peasants and petty zamindars gave free expression to their grievances by attacking the moneylenders and zamindars who had displaced them from the land. They took advantage of the revolt to destroy the moneylenders' account books and debt records. They also attacked the British-established law courts, revenue offices (tehsils), revenue records and police stations.

According to one estimate, of the total number of about 1,50,000 men who died fighting the English in Awadh, over 1,00,000 were civilians.

Within a month of the capture of Delhi, the revolt spread to different parts of the country.

## STORM CENTRES AND LEADERS OF THE REVOLT

At Delhi the nominal and symbolic leadership belonged to the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, but the real command lay with a court of soldiers headed by General Bakht Khan who

#### THE Revolt of 1857 7

had led the revolt of Bareilly troops and brought them to Delhi. The court consisted of ten members, six from the army and four from the civilian departments. The court conducted the affairs of the state in the name of the emperor. Emperor Bahadur Shah was perhaps the weakest link in the chain of leadership of the revolt. His weak personality, old age and lack of leadership qualities created political weakness at the nerve centre of the revolt and did incalculable damage to it.

At Kanpur, the natural choice was Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao II. He was refused the family title and, banished from Poona, was living near Kanpur. Nana Saheb expelled the English from Kanpur, proclaimed himself the Peshwa, acknowledged Bahadur Shah as the emperor of India and declared himself to be his governor. Sir Hugh Wheeler, commanding the station, surrendered on June 27, 1857.

Begum Hazrat Mahal took over the reigns at Lucknow where the rebellion broke out on June 4, 1857 and popular sympathy was overwhelmingly in favour of the deposed Nawab. Her son, Birjis Qadir, was proclaimed the Nawab and a regular administration was organized with important offices shared equally by Muslims and Hindus. Henry Lawrence, the British resident, the European inhabitants and a few hundred loyal sepoys took shelter in the residency. The residency was besieged by the Indian rebels and Sir Henry was killed during the siege. The command of the besieged garrison devolved on Brigadier Inglis who held out against heavy odds. The early attempts of Sir Henry Havelock and Sir James Outram to recover Lucknow met with no success. Finally, Sir Colin Campbell, the new commander-in-chief, evacuated the Europeans with the help of Gorkha regiments. In March 1858, the city was finally recovered by the British, but guerrilla activity continued till September of the same year.

At Bareilly, Khan Bahadur, a descendant of the former ruler of Rohilkhand, was placed in command. Not enthusiastic about the pension being granted by the British, he organized

#### 8 A Brief History of Modern India

The Revolt of 1857. An army of 40,000 soldiers and offered stiff resistance to the British.

In Bihar, the revolt was led by Kunwar Singh, the zamindar of Jagdishpur. An old man in his seventies, he nursed a grudge against the British who had deprived him of his estates. He unhesitatingly joined the sepoys when they reached Arrah from Dinapore.

Maulvi Ahmadullah of Faizabad was another outstanding leader of the revolt. He was a native of Madras and had moved to Faizabad in the north where he fought a stiff battle against the British troops. He emerged as



one of the revolt's acknowledged leaders once it broke out in Awadh in May 1857.

The most outstanding leader of the revolt was Rani Laxmibai, who assumed the leadership of the sepoys at Jhansi. Lord Dalhousie, the governor-general, had refused to allow her adopted son to succeed to the throne after her husband Raja Ganbadhar Rao died, and had annexed the state by the application of the infamous 'Doctrine of Lapse'. Driven out of Jhansi by British forces, she gave the battle cry—"main apni Jhansi nahi doongi" (I shall not give away my Jhansi). She was joined by Tantia Tope, a close associate of Nana Saheb, after the loss of Kanpur. Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Tope marched towards Gwalior where they were hailed by the Indian soldiers. The Scindhia, the local ruler, however, decided to side with the English and took shelter at Agra. Nana Saheb was proclaimed the Peshwa and plans were chalked out for a march into the south. Gwalior was recaptured by the English in June 1858.

For more than a year the rebels carried on their struggle against heavy odds.

#### SUPPRESSION OF REVOLT

The revolt was finally suppressed. The British captured Delhi on September 20, 1857 after prolonged and bitter fighting. John Nicholson, the leader of the siege, was badly wounded and later succumbed to his injuries. Bahadur Shah was taken prisoner. The royal princes were captured and butchered on the spot, publicly shot at point blank range, by Lieutenant Hudson himself. The emperor was exiled to Rangoon where he died in 1862. Thus the great House of Mughals was finally and completely extinguished. Terrible vengeance was wreaked on the inhabitants of Delhi. With the fall of Delhi the focal point of the revolt disappeared.

One by one, all the great leaders of the revolt fell. Military operations for the recapture of Kanpur were closely associated with the recovery of Lucknow. Sir Colin Campbell occupied Kanpur on December 6, 1857. Nana Saheb, defeated at Kanpur, escaped to Nepal in early 1859, never to be heard of again. His close associate Tantia Tope escaped into the jungles of central India, was captured while asleep in April 1859 and put to death. The Rani of Jhansi had died on the battlefield earlier in June 1858. Jhansi was recaptured through assault by Sir Hugh Rose. By 1859, Kunwar Singh, Bakht Khan, Khan Bahadur Khan of Bareilly, Rao Sahib (brother of Nana Saheb) and Maulvi Ahmadullah were all dead, while the Begum of Awadh was compelled to hide in Nepal. At Benaras a rebellion had been organized which was mercilessly suppressed, by Colonel Neil, who put to death all suspected rebels and even disorderly sepoys. By the end of 1859, British authority over India was fully re-established. The British Government had to pour immense supplies of men, money and arms into the country, though Indians had to later repay the entire cost through their own suppression.

#### CAUSES OF FAILURE OF REVOLT

**Limited territorial spread** was one factor; there was no all-India veneer about the revolt. The eastern, southern and western parts of India remained more or less unaffected.

**Certain classes and groups did not join and, in fact, worked against the revolt.** Big zamindars acted as "breakwaters to storm"; even Awadh tahacildars backed off once promises

## 10 A Brief History of Modern India

of land restitution were spelt out. Moneylenders and merchants suffered the wrath of the mutineers badly and anyway saw their class interests better protected under British patronage. **Modern educated Indians viewed this revolt as backward looking,** and mistakenly hoped the British would usher in an era of modernisation. Most Indian rulers refused to join and often gave active help to the British. By one estimate, not more than one-fourth of the total area and not more than one-tenth of the total population was affected.

The Indian soldiers were poorly equipped materially, fighting generally with swords and spears and very few guns and muskets. On the other hand, the European soldiers were equipped with the latest weapons of war like the Enfield rifle. The electric telegraph kept the commander-in-chief informed about the movements and strategy of the rebels.

The revolt was **poorly organized with no coordination or central leadership.** The principal rebel leaders—Nana Saheb, Tantia Tope, Kunwar Singh, Laxmibai—were no match to their British opponents in generalship. On the other hand, the East India Company was fortunate in having the services of men of exceptional abilities in the Lawrence brothers, John Nicholson, James Outram, Henry Havelock, Edward, etc.

**The mutineers lacked a clear understanding of colonial rule;** nor did they have a forward looking programme, a coherent ideology, a political perspective or a societal alternative. The rebels represented diverse elements with differing grievances and concepts of current politics.

**The lack of unity among Indians** was perhaps unavoidable at this stage of Indian history. Modern nationalism was yet unknown in India. In fact, the revolt of 1857 played an important role in bringing the Indian people together and imparting to them the consciousness of belonging to one country.

## HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY FACTOR

**During the entire revolt, there was complete cooperation between Hindus and Muslims at all levels—people, soldiers,**

## The Revolt of 1857

**leaders.** All rebels acknowledged Bahadur Shah Zafar, a Muslim, as the emperor and the first impulse of the Hindu sepoys at Meerut was to march to Delhi, the Mughal imperial capital. Rebels and sepoys, both Hindu and Muslim, respected each other's sentiments. **Immediate banning of cow**



slaughter was ordered once the revolt was successful in a particular area Both Hindus and Muslims were well represented in leadership, for instance Nana Saheb had Azimullah, a Muslim and an expert in political propaganda, as an aide, while Laxmibai had the solid support of Afghan soldiers.

Thus, the events of 1857 demonstrated that the people and politics of India were not basically communal before 1858.

#### NATURE OF THE REVOLT

Views differ on the nature of the 1857 revolt. It was a mere 'Sepoy Mutiny' to some British historians—"a wholly unpatriotic and selfish Sepoy Mutiny with no native leadership and no popular support", said Sir John Seeley. However, it is not a complete picture of the event as it involved many sections of the civilian population and not just the sepoys. The discontent of the sepoys was just one cause of the disturbance.

Dr K. Datta considers the revolt of 1857 to have been "in the main a military outbreak, which was taken advantage of by certain discontented princes and landlords, whose interests had been affected by the new political order". The last mentioned factor gave it an aura of a popular uprising in certain areas. It was "never all-Indian in character, but was localised, restricted and poorly organized". Further, says Datta, the movement was marked by absence of cohesion and unity of purpose among the various sections of the rebels.

It was at the beginning of the twentieth century that the 1857 revolt came to be interpreted as a "planned war of national independence", by V.D. Savarkar in his book, First War of Indian Independence. Dr S.N. Sen in his Eighteen FiftySeven considers the revolt as having begun as a fight for religion but ended as a war of independence. Dr R.C.

#### 12 A Brief History of Modern India

Majumdar, however, considers it as neither the first, nor national, nor a war of independence as large parts of the country remained unaffected and many sections of the people took no part in the upsurge.

According to Marxist historians, the 1857 revolt was "the struggle of the soldier-peasant democratic combine against foreign as well as feudal bondage". However, this view does not stand scrutiny in the light of the fact that the leaders of the revolt themselves came from a feudal background.

The revolt of 1857 is not easy to categorise. While one can easily dismiss some views such as those of L.E.R. Rees who considered it to be a war of fanatic religionists against Christians or T.R. Holmes who saw in it a conflict between civilisation and barbarism, one cannot quite go so far as to accept it as a war for independence. It had seeds of nationalism and anti-imperialism but the concept of common nationality and nationhood was not inherent to the revolt of 1857.

One may say that the revolt of 1857 was the first great struggle of Indians to throw off British rule. It established local traditions of resistance to British rule which were to pave the way for the modern national movement.

#### CONSEQUENCES

The revolt of 1857 marks a turning point in the history of India. It led to changes in the system of administration and the policy of the Government.

- (i) The direct responsibility for the administration of the country was assumed by the British Crown and Company rule was abolished. The assumption of the Government of India by the sovereign of Great Britain was announced by Lord Canning at a durbar at Allahabad in the 'Queen's Proclamation' issued on November 1, 1858.

(ii) The era of annexations and expansion ended and the British promised to respect the dignity and rights of the native princes.

#### The Revolt of 1857 13

- (ii) The Indian states were henceforth to recognise the paramountcy of the British Crown and were to be treated as parts of a single charge.
- (iii) The Army, which was at the forefront of the outbreak, was thoroughly reorganised and British military policy came to be dominated by the idea of "division and counterpoise".

(v) Racial hatred and suspicion between the Indians and the English was aggravated.

#### Views

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the so-called First

National War of Independence of 1857 is neither First, not National, nor War of Independence.

R.C. Majumdar, The Mutiny became a Revolt and assumed a political character when the mutineers of Meerut placed themselves under the king of Delhi a section of the landed aristocracy and civil population decided in his favour. What began as a fight for religion ended as a war of independence. S.N. Sen had a single leader of ability arisen among them (the rebels), we must have been lost beyond redemption. John Lawrence, The revolt of 1857 was a struggle of the soldier-peasant democratic combine against foreign imperialism as well as indigenous landlordism.

#### Marxist Interpretation

Here lay the woman who was the only man among the rebels.

Hugh Rose (a tribute to the Rani of Jhansi from the man who defeated her)

It was far more than a mutiny, yet much less than a first war of independence.  
taniey vvolpert

#### 14 A Brief History of Modern India

Summary Revolt—a product of character and policies of colonial rule.

##### Economic causes—

Heavy taxation under new revenue settlement,  
Summary evictions,  
Discriminatory tariff policy against Indian products,  
Destruction of traditional handicrafts industry, and  
Absence of concomitant industrialisation on modern lines that hit  
peasants, artisans and small zamindars.

##### Political causes—

Greedy policy of aggrandisement,  
Absentee sovereignty character of British rule,  
British interference in socio-religious affairs of Indian public.

##### Military causes—

Discontent among sepoys for economic,  
Psychological and religious reasons,  
Coupled with a long history of revolts.

#### CENTRES OF REVOLT AND LEADERS

Delhi	- General Khan	Kanpur	- Nana Saheb	Lucknow	-
Begum Hazrat Mahal	Bareilly	- Khan Bahadur	Bihar		-
Kunwar Singh	Faizabad	- Maulvi Ahmadullah	Jhansi	- Rani	
Laxmibai					

#### THE BRITISH RESISTANCE

Delhi -- John Nicholson,  
Kanpur Lucknow  
Jhansi Benaras  
- Lieutenant Willoughby,  
Lieutenant Hudson - Sir Hugh Wheeler, Sir Colin Campbell - Henry  
Lawrence, Brigadier Inglis,  
Henry Havelock, James Outram, Sir Colin Campbell - Sir Hugh Rose -  
Colonel James Neill

#### CAUSES OF FAILURE

Limited territorial and social base.  
Crucial support of certain sections of Indian public to British  
authorities.

Lack of resources as compared to those of the British.  
Lack of coordination and a central leadership.  
Lack of a coherent ideology and a political perspective.

#### NATURE

Not quite the first war of independence but sowed the seeds of nationalism and quest for freedom from alien rule.

#### EFFECT

Crown took over.  
Company rule abolished.  
Queen's Proclamation altered administration.  
Army reorganised.  
Racial hatred deepened.

## CHAPTER 2

### Religious and Social Reform Movements

#### GENESIS OF THE AWAKENING

The dawn of the nineteenth century witnessed the birth of a new vision—a modern vision among some enlightened sections of the Indian society. This enlightened vision was to shape the course of events for decades to come and even beyond. This process of reawakening, sometimes, but not with full justification, defined as the 'Renaissance', did not always follow the intended line and gave rise to some undesirable by-products as well, which have become as much a part of daily existence in the whole of the Indian subcontinent as have the fruits of these reform movements.

The presence of a colonial government on Indian soil played a complex, yet decisive role in this crucial phase of modern Indian history. The impact of British rule on Indian society and culture was widely different from what India had known before. Most of the earlier intruders who came to India had settled within her frontiers, were absorbed by her superior culture and had become part of the land and its people. However, the British conquest was different. It came at a time when India, in contrast to an enlightened Europe of the eighteenth century affected in every aspect by science and scientific outlook, presented the picture of a stagnant civilisation and a static and decadent society.

Indian society in the nineteenth century was caught in a vicious web created by religious superstitions and social obscurantism. **Hinduism** had become a **compound of magic, animism and superstition**. The priests exercised an overwhelming and, indeed, unhealthy influence on the minds of the people. Idolatry and polytheism helped to reinforce

their position, and their monopoly of scriptural knowledge imparted a deceptive character to all religious systems. There was nothing that religious ideology could not persuade people to do.

Social conditions were equally depressing. The most distressing was the position of women. The birth of a girl was unwelcome, her marriage, a burden and her widowhood inauspicious. Attempts to **kill female infants** at birth were not unusual. Several women hardly had a married life worth the name, yet when their **husbands died** they were expected to **commit sati** which Raja Ram Mohan Roy described as a **'murder according to every shastra**. If they succeeded in overcoming this social coercion, they were condemned as widows to life-long misery, neglect and humiliation.

Another debilitating factor was caste. It sought to maintain a system of segregation, hierarchically ordained on the basis of ritual status. At the bottom of the ladder came the **untouchables or scheduled castes**, as they came to be called later, who formed about twenty per cent of the Hindu population. The untouchables suffered from numerous and severe disabilities and restrictions. The system splintered people into numerous groups. In modern times it became a major obstacle in the growth of a united national feeling and the spread of democracy. It may also be noted that caste consciousness, particularly with regard to marriage, prevailed also among Muslims, Christians and Sikhs who practised untouchability, though in a less virulent form. The rules and regulations of caste hampered social mobility, fostered social divisions and sapped individual initiative. Above all, the humiliation of untouchability militated against human dignity.

The establishment of colonial rule in India was followed by a systematic attempt to disseminate colonial culture and ideology as the dominant cultural current. Faced with the challenge of the intrusion of colonial culture and ideology, an attempt to reinvigorate traditional institutions and to realise the potential of traditional culture developed during the nineteenth century.

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements

17

The impact of modern Western culture and consciousness of defeat by a foreign power gave birth to a new awakening. There was an awareness that a vast country like India had been colonised by a handful of foreigners because of internal weaknesses within the Indian social structure and culture. For some time it seemed that India had lagged behind in the race of civilisation. This produced diverse reactions. **Some English educated Bengali youth developed a revulsion for Hindu religion and culture**, gave up old religious ideas and traditions and deliberately adopted practices most **offensive to Hindu** sentiments, such as drinking **wine and eating beef**. The response, indeed, was varied but the need to reform social and religious life was a commonly shared conviction.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the rising tide of nationalism and democracy also found expression in movements to reform and democratise the social institutions and religious outlook of, the Indian people. Factors such as growth of nationalist sentiments,

emergence of new economic forces, spread of education, impact of modern Western ideas and culture and increased awareness of the world strengthened the resolve to reform.

The socio-cultural regeneration of the India of the nineteenth century was occasioned by the colonial presence, but not created by it.

#### Social Base

The social base of this quest was the newly emerging middle class and traditionally as well as western educated intellectuals, but there was a significant contrast between the broadly bourgeois ideals derived from a. growing awareness of contemporary developments in the West, and a predominantly non-bourgeois social base. nineteenth century intelligentsia searched for its model in the European 'middle class', which, as it learnt through western education, had brought about the great transformation in the West from medieval to modern times through movements like the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and democratic revolution, or reform. Yet its own social roots lay not in industry or trade, increasingly

#### 18 A Brief History of Modern India

controlled by British managing agency firms and their Marwari subordinates, but in government service or the professions of law, education, journalism or medicine—with which was very often combined some connection with land in the shape of the intermediate tenures.

#### Ideological Base

The important intellectual criteria which gave these reform movements an ideological unity were rationalism, religious universalism and humanism. Social relevance was judged by a rationalist critique. Raja Rammohan Roy upheld the principle of causality linking the whole phenomenal universe and demonstrability as the sole criterion of truth. Akshay Kumar Dutt, while proclaiming that 'rationalism is our only preceptor', held that all natural and social phenomena could be analysed and understood by purely mechanical processes. This perspective enabled them to adopt a rational approach to tradition and evaluate the contemporary socio-religious practices from the standpoint of social utility and to replace faith with rationality. For instance, in the Brahmo Samaj the repudiation of the infallibility of the Vedas was the result, while the Aligarh movement emphasised reconciliation of Islamic teachings with the needs of the modern age. Syed Ahmed Khan went to the extent of emphasising that religious tenets were not immutable.

Many of the intellectuals abandoned, though in varying degrees, the principle of authority in religion and evaluated truth in any religion by the criteria of logic; reason or science. Swami Vivekananda held that the same method of investigation which applies to other sciences should form the basis on which religion is to justify itself. Although, some reformers tended to appeal to faith and ancient authority to bolster their appeal, overall a rational and secular outlook was very much evident in posing an alternative to prevalent social practices. For instance, Akshat cited medical against child marriage. to the past was



to be used only as an aid and an instrument. Neither a revival of the past nor a total break with tradition was envisaged.

Though the reformers tried to reform their religions,

Religious and Social Reform Movements 19

their religious perspective was universalistic. Raja Rammohan Jeligiari<sup>2</sup> a samskrit scholar and a defender of the basic and universal principles of a religion—such as the monotheism of the Vedas and—while attacking polytheism and trinitarianism of Christianity said that all had the same 'din (faith) ever. Keshub Chandra Sen held that: our position is not that truths are to be found in all religions, but that all establishes the universalist perspective was an attempt on the part of social reformers to contend with the influence of religious identity on the social and political outlook of the people which was indeed strong. However, under the onslaught of colonial culture and ideology, instead of providing the basis for the development of a secular ethos, universalism retreated into religious particularism towards the second half of the nineteenth century.

The social reform movements were also an embodiment of a new humanitarian morality which included the notion that humanity can progress and has progressed, and that moral values are ultimately those which favour human progress. An emphasis on the individual's right to interpret religious scriptures in the light of human reason and human welfare and a general attack on priestly domination of religious practices underlined the humanist aspect of religious reform movements.

Religious reformation was the major but not the exclusive concern of these movements. Instead of other-worldliness and salvation, attention was focussed on worldly existence. Because of the strong religious coefficient of social practices and the fact that religion was the dominant ideology of the times, it was not possible to undertake any social action without coming to grips with it.

These movements embraced the entire cultural existence, the way of life and all significant practices like language,

## 20 A Brief History of Modern India

religion, art and philosophy. The evolution of an alternative cultural-ideological system and the generation of traditions emerged as twin movements, which sought to reconstruct traditional knowledge, cultivation of vernacular languages, creation of an alternate system of education, defence of religion, efforts to regenerate Indian art and literature, emphasis on Indian dress and food, attempts to revitalise the Indian systems of medicine and to probe the potentialities of pre-colonial technology.

These reform movements could broadly be classified in two categories—**reformist movements** like the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Aligarh movement, and the **revivalist movements** like Arya Samaj and the

Deoband movement. Both the reformist and revivalist movements depended, with varying degrees, on an appeal to the lost, purity of the religion they sought to reform. The only difference between one reform movement and the other lay in the degree to which it relied on tradition or on reason and conscience.

#### SOCIAL REFORM

The humanistic ideals of social equality and the equal worth of all individuals which inspired the newly educated middle class had a major impact on the field of social reform. This enlightened section of society was disgusted with the prevailing social ills and inhuman social practices. The social reform movements formed an integral part of the religious reforms primarily because nearly all the effort towards social ills like untouchability and gender-based inequity derived legitimacy from religion in one way or the other. In later years though, the social reform movement gradually dissociated itself from religion and, adopted a secular approach. Also, earlier the reform movements had a rather narrow social base—they were limited to the upper and middle classes and upper castes who tried to adjust their modernised views with respect to the existing social conditions. But later on, the social reform movements penetrated the lower strata of society to revolutionise and reconstruct the social sphere.

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements

21

In the beginning, organisations such as the Social Conference, Servants of India Society and the Christian missionaries were instrumental in social reform along with many enlightened individuals like Jyotiba Phule, Gopalhari Deshmukh, K.T. Telang, B.M. Malabari, D.K. Karve, Sri Narayana Guru, E.V. Ramaswami Naicker and B.R. Ambedkar. In later years, especially with the onset of the twentieth century, the national movement provided the leadership and organisation for social reform. To reach the masses, propaganda in Indian languages was the modus operandi of the reformers who used a variety of media such as novels, dramas, poetry, short stories, the press and, in the 1930s and later on, the cinema to spread their views. Broadly, the social reform movements had a two-joint-fight for betterment of status of to remove disability arising out of untouchability.

**Fight for Betterment of Position of Women** The reformers had to work against great odds. Women were generally accorded a low status, and were considered to be inferior adjuncts to men, with no identity of their own. Their desire to give expression to their talents and energies were further suppressed by practices such as purdah, early marriage, ban on widow-remarriage, sati, etc. Both Hindu and Muslim women were economically and socially dependent, while education was generally denied to them. The Hindu women had no right to inherit property or to terminate an undesirable marriage. The Muslim women could inherit but only half as much as men could, while in matters of divorce there was no equality between men and women. Polygamy was prevalent among Hindus as well as Muslims.

Their glorification as wives and mothers was the only way in which the society recognised the contribution of women as members of society. The struggle for the improvement of the status of women in the society was considered to be vital, since a radical change in the domestic sphere—where initial socialisation of the individual takes place

## 22            A Brief History of Modern India

and where a crucial role is played by women—was the need of the hour. There was a clear understanding that this change would translate into reformed homes and reformed men, and that no country whose females were sunk in ignorance could ever make significant progress in civilisation.

The social reform movements, the freedom struggle, movements led by enlightened women themselves and, later, free India's Constitution have done much for the emancipation of women.

The reformers basically appealed to the doctrines of individualism and equality, and argued, to bolster their appeal, that true religion did not sanction an inferior status to women. They raised their voice against degrading customs such as polygamy, purdah, child marriage, restrictions on widow remarriage, and worked relentlessly to establish educational facilities for women, to persuade the Government to enact favourable legislations for women and in general to propagate giving up of medieval, feudal attitudes.

Because of the indefatigable efforts of the reformers, a number of administrative measures were adopted by the Government to improve the condition of women.

### Abolition of Sati

Influenced by the frontal attack launched by the enlightened Indian reformers led by Raja Rammohan Roy, the Government declared the practice of sad or the burning alive of widows illegal and punishable by criminal courts as culpable homicide. The regulation of 1829 was applicable in the first instance to Bengal Presidency alone, but was extended in slightly modified forms to Madras and Bombay Presidencies in 1830.

### Female Infanticide

The practice of murdering female infants immediately after birth was common among upper class Bengalis and Rajputs who considered females to be an economic burden. The Bengal regulations of 1795 and 1804 declared infanticide illegal and equivalent to murder, while an Act passed in 1870 made, it compulsory for parents to register the birth of all babies and provided for verification of female

## Religious and Social Reform Movements

23

children for some years after birth, particularly in areas where the custom was resorted to in utmost privacy.

### Widow Remarriage

The **Brahmo Samaj** had the issue of widow remarriage high on its agenda and did much to popularise it. But it was mainly due to the efforts of Pandit **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar** (1820-91), the principal of Sanskrit College, Calcutta, that the **Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856**, which legalised marriage of widows and declared issues from such marriages as legitimate, was passed by the Government. Vidyasagar cited Vedic texts to prove that the Hindu religion sanctioned widow remarriage.

Jagannath Shankar Seth and Bhau Daji were among the active promoters of girls' schools in Maharashtra. Vishnu Shastri Pandit founded the Widow Remarriage Association in the 1850s. Another prominent worker in this field was Karsondas Mulji who started the Satya Prakash in Gujarati in 1852 to advocate widow remarriage.

Similar efforts were made by Professor D.K. Karve in western India and by Veerasalingarn Pantulu in Madras. Karve himself married a widow in 1893. He dedicated his life to the upliftment of Hindu widows and became the secretary of the Widow Remarriage Association. He opened a widows' home in Poona to give the high caste widows an interest in life by providing them with facilities for vocational training. He crowned his work by setting up an Indian Women's University at Bombay in 1916. The right of widows to remarriage was also advocated by B.M. Malabari, Narmad, Justice Govind Mahadeo Ranade and K. Natarajan among others.

#### Child Marriage

The **Native Marriage Act** (or Civil Marriage Act) signified the coming of legislative action in prohibiting child marriage in 1872. It had a limited impact as the Act was not applicable to Hindus, Muslims and other recognised faiths. The relentless efforts of a Parsi reformer, **B.M. Malabari**, were rewarded, by the enactment of the Age of Consent Act (1891) which forbade the marriage of **girls below the age of 12**. The **Sarda Act (1930)** further pushed up

#### 24 A Brief History of Modern India

the marriage age to 18 and 14 for boys and girls respectively. In free India, the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, **1978 raised** the age of marriage for **girls from 15 to 18 years and for boys from 18 to 21**.

#### Education of Women

The Christian missionaries were the first to set up the **Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in 1819**. The **Bethune School, founded by J.E.D. Bethune**, president of the Council of Education in Calcutta in **1849** was the first fruit of the powerful movement for women's education that arose in the 1840s and 1850s. **Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was associated with no less than 35 girls' schools in Bengal** and is considered one of the pioneers of women's education. **Charles Wood's Despatch** on Education (1854) laid great stress on the need for female education. In 1914, the **Women's Medical Service** did a lot of work in training **nurses and midwives**. The Indian Women's University started by Professor Karve in 1916 was one of the outstanding institutions imparting education to women. In the same year **Lady Hardinge Medical College** was opened in Delhi.

**Health facilities** began to be provided to women with the opening of **Dufferin Hospitals** in the **1880s**.

Participation in the swadeshi and anti-partition and the Home Rule movements during the opening decades of the twentieth century was a major liberating experience for the otherwise home-centred Indian women. After 1918, they faced lathis and bullets and were jailed during political processions, picketing, etc. They actively participated in trade union and kisan movements, or revolutionary movements. They voted in, stood for and got elected to various legislatures and local bodies. **Sarojini Naidu went on to become the president of the Indian National Congress (1925) and later the governor of the United Provinces (1947-49).**

After 1920, aware and self-confident women led a women's movement. Many organisations and institutions such as the All India Women's Conference (established in 1927) came up.

## Religious and Social Reform Movements 25

### Legislative Measures in Free India

Free India's Constitution provides legal equality to women and prohibits any discrimination by the state on the basis of gender (Articles 14 and 15). The Specially marriageAs1125 permits intercaste and interreligious marriage. **The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 abolished bigamy and permitted dissolution of marriage on specific grounds. The Hindu Succession Act 1956 made the daughter equal co-heir with son**, thus abolishing discrimination with respect to inheritance laws. **The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act** enhanced the status of women in matters of adoption. was amended in April 1976 to cover women who do not fall within the purview of the Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948. The Directive Principles of State Policy provide for **equal pay for equal work for both men and women**. provided for equal remuneration to men and women workers and prevention of discrimination against women in matters of employment. The **Factories Act 1976** provided for **establishment of creches where 30 women (as against 50 previously) are employed**. The Criminal bills passed by Parliament 83 amended the Indian Penal Code, Indian Evidence Act and Criminal Procedure Code to make laws against rape and other such crimes against women much more stringent and also to add a new provision in the Indian Penal Code to make cruelty against a woman by her husband and other relations punishable. Traffic was amended and retitled as Immoral **TraffisErevestoril Act 1986** to cover all persons—male or female—who are sexually exploited for commercial purposes. The **Dowry Prohibition** amended in **1986** made the giving and taking of dowry an offence. In 1987, an Act was passed making the **glorification of sati** a cognisable offence.

### Struggle Against Caste-Based Exploitation

The original four-fold division of Hindu society got further sub-divided into numerous castes (jatis) and sub-castes due to racial admixture, geographical expansion and diversification of crafts which gave rise to new vocations.

## 26 A Brief History of Modern India

According to concept of Hindu chaturvarnashrama, the caste of a person determined the status and relative purity of different sections of population. Caste, determined who could get education or ownership of landed property, the kind of profession one should pursue, whom one could dine with or marry, etc. In general, the caste of a person decided his/ her social loyalties even before birth. The dress, food, place of residence, sources of water for drinking and irrigation, entry into temples—all these were regulated by the caste coefficient.

The worst-hit by the discriminatory institution' of caste were the untouchables or the scheduled castes, as they came to be called later on. The disabilities imposed on the lower castes were humiliating, inhuman and based on the antidemocratic principle of inequality by birth.

#### Factors which Undermined Caste Rigidities

The pressure of British rule in India unleashed certain forces, sometimes through direct administrative measures and sometimes indirectly by creating favourable circumstances. For instance, the creation of private property in land and free sale of land upset caste equations. A close interlink between caste and vocation could hardly continue in a state of destruction of village autarchy. Besides, modern commerce and industry gave birth to several economic avenues while growing urbanisation and modern means of transport added to the mobility of populations. The British administration introduced the concept of equality before law in a., uniformly applied system of law which dealt a severe blow to social and legal inequalities, while the judicial functions of caste panchayats were taken away. The administrative services were made open to all castes and the new education system was on totally secular lines.

The social reform movements also strove to undermine caste-based exploitation. From the mid-19th century onwards, numerous, organisations and groups such as the Brahmo Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophists, the Social Conference and individuals

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements

27

worked to spread education among the untouchables and remove restrictions imposed on them from entering temples or using ponds, tanks, etc. Although many of them defended the chaturvarna system, they criticised the caste system, especially untouchability. The social reformers attacked the rigid hereditary basis of caste distinctions and the law of karma which formed the basis of the religio-philosophic defence of the undemocratic authoritarian caste institution. They called on people to work for betterment in the real world in which they lived, rather than strive for salvation after death. For instance, the Arya Samaj while crusading against disintegration of Hindu society into myriad sub-castes, aimed at reconstructing it on the original four-fold division and upholding the right of even, the lowest castes to study the scriptures.

The national movement with its thrust against the forces which tended to divide the society took inspiration from the principles of liberty and



equality. The national leaders and organisations opposed caste privileges, fought for equal civic rights and free development of the individual. The caste divisions were diluted, although in a limited 'manner, because of mass participation in demonstrations, meetings and satyagraha struggles. The Congress governments in various provinces after 1937 did some useful work for the upliftment of the depressed classes; for instance, free education for Harijans (untouchables) was introduced in some provinces. The rulers of states like Travancore, Indore and Devas themselves took the initiative in opening all state temples by proclamation.

Gandhi always had in mind the objective of eradicating untouchability by root and branch. His ideas were based on the grounds of humanism and reason. He argued that the Shastras did not sanction untouchability and even if they did, they should be ignored since truth cannot be confined within the covers of a book. In 1932, he founded the All India Harijan Sangh.

With increasing opportunities of education and general

## 28 A Brief History of Modern India

awakening, there were stirrings among the lower castes themselves which gradually developed into a powerful movement in defence of their rights and against upper caste oppression. In Maharashtra, Jyotiba Phule, born in a low caste Mali family, led a movement against the brahminical domination of Hindu society. He accorded the highest priority to education of lower castes, especially girls for whom he opened several schools. Babasaheb Amlbedkar, who had experienced the worst form of casteist discrimination during his childhood, fought against upper caste tyranny throughout his life. He organized the All India Scheduled Castes Federation, while several other leaders of the depressed classes founded the All India Depressed Classes Association. Ambedkar condemned the hierarchical and insular caste system and advocated the annihilation of the institution of caste for the real progress of the nation. The struggle of the depressed classes was rewarded with special representation for these classes in the Government of India Act, 1935.

Others in the 1900s, the Maharaja of Kolhapur encouraged the non-brahmin movement which spread to the southern states in the first decade of the twentieth century and was joined by the Kammas, Reddis, Vellalas, (the powerful intermediate castes) and the Muslims.

During the 1920s in South India, the non-brahmins organized the Self-Respect Movement led by E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker. There were numerous other movements demanding lifting of ban on entry of lower castes into temples; for instance Sri Narayana Guru in Kerala led a lifelong struggle against upper caste domination. He coined the slogan "one religion, one caste, one God, for mankind", which his disciple Sahadaran Ayyapan changed into "no religion, no caste, no God for mankind".

But the struggle against caste could not be successful during the British rule. The foreign government had its limitations—it could not afford to invite hostile reaction from the orthodox sections by taking

up any radical measures. Also, no social uplift was possible without economic and political

## Religious and Social Reform Movements 29

upliftment. All this could be realised only under the government of a free India. The Constitution of free India abolishes untouchability and declares the endorsement of any disability arising out of untouchability as unlawful. It also forbids any restriction on access to wells, tanks, bathing ghats, hotels, cinemas, clubs, etc. In one of the Directive Principles, the Constitution has laid down that "the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by, securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice—social, economic and political—shall inform all the institutions of the national life".

### A GENERAL SURVEY OF SOCIO-CULTURAL REFORM MOVEMENTS AND THEIR LEADERS Raja Rammohan Roy and Brahmo Samaj

Raja Rammohan Roy, the father of Indian Renaissance, was a man of versatile genius. The Brahmo Samaj established by him was the earliest reform movement of the modern type greatly influenced by modern western ideas.

As a reformist ideologue, Roy believed in the modern scientific approach and principles of human dignity and social equality. He put his faith in monotheism. He wrote Gift to Monotheists (1809) and translated into Bengali the Vedas and the five Upanishads to prove his conviction that ancient Hindu texts support monotheism. In 1814, he set up Atmiya Sabha in Calcutta to campaign against idolatry, caste rigidities, meaningless rituals and other social ills. Strongly influenced by rationalist ideas, he declared that the Vedanta is based on reason and that, if reason demanded it, even a departure from the scriptures is justified. He said the principles of rationalism applied to other sects also, particularly to the elements of blind faith in them. In Precepts of Jesus (1820), he tried to separate the moral and philosophical message of the New Testament, which he praised, from its miracle stories. He earned the wrath of missionaries over his advocacy to incorporate the message of Christ in Hinduism. He stood for a creative and intellectual process of selecting the best from eastern and western

## 30 A Brief History of Modern India

cultures, over which, again, he faced orthodox reaction. He founded the Brahmo Sabha (later Brahmo Samaj) in order to institutionalise his ideas and mission. His ideas and activities were aimed at political uplift of the masses through social reform and to that extent can be said to have had nationalist undertones.

Roy was a determined crusader against the inhuman practice of sati. He started his anti-sati struggle in 1818 and he cited sacred texts to prove his contention that no religion sanctioned the burning alive of widows, besides appealing to humanity, reason and compassion. He also visited the cremation grounds, organized vigilance groups and filed counter petitions to the Government during his struggle against sati. His efforts were rewarded by the Government Regulation in 1829 which

declared the **practice of sati a crime**. As a campaigner for women's rights, Roy condemned the general subjugation of women and opposed prevailing misconceptions which formed the basis of according an inferior social status to women. Roy attacked polygamy and the degraded state of widows and demanded the right of inheritance and property for women.

Rammohan Roy did much to disseminate the benefits of modern education to his countrymen. He supported **David Hare's efforts to found the Hindu College in 1817**, while Roy's English school taught mechanics and Voltaire's philosophy. **In 1825, he established a Vedanta college** where courses in both Indian learning and Western social and physical sciences were offered. He also helped enrich the Bengali language by compiling a **Bengali grammar book** and evolving a modern elegant prose style.

Roy was a gifted linguist. He knew more than a dozen languages including Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English, French, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. A knowledge of different languages helped him broaden his range of study. As a pioneer in Indian journalism, Roy brought out journals in Bengali, Hindi, English, Persian to educate and inform the public and represent their grievances before the Government. As a political activist,

Religious and Social Reform Movements

31

Roy condemned oppressive practices of Bengali zamindars and demanded fixation of maximum rents. He also demanded **abolition of taxes on tax-free lands**. He called for a reduction of export duties on goods abroad and abolition of the East India Company's trading rights. He demanded the executive from the hands of Europeans and that trials be held

Roy was an internationalist with a vision beyond his times. He stood for cooperation of thought and activity and brotherhood among nations. His understanding of the international character of the principles of liberty, equality and justice indicated that he well understood the significance of the modern age. He supported the revolutions of Naples and Spanish America and condemned the oppression of Ireland by absentee English landlordism and threatened emigration from the empire if the reform bill was not passed.

**Roy had David Hare, Alexander Duff, Debendranath Tagore, P.K. Tagore, Chandrashekhar Deb and Tarachand Chakraborty as his associates.**

Raja Rammohan Roy founded the **Brahmo Sabha** in **August 1828**; it was later renamed, Brahmo Samaj. The Samaj, was committed to "the most rational the Eternal, Unsearchable, Immutable Being who is the Author, Preserver of the Universe". Prayers, meditation of the Upanishads were to be the forms of worship and no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait etc, were to be allowed in the Samaj buildings, thus underlining the Samaj's opposition to idolatry and meaningless rituals. The long-term agenda of the Brahmo Samaj—to purify Hinduism and to preach monotheism—was based on the twin pillars of reason and the Vedas and Upanishads. The Samaj also tried to incorporate teachings of other religions and kept its emphasis on human dignity, opposition to idolatry and criticism of social evils such as sati.

Roy did not want to establish a new religion. He only wanted to purify Hinduism of the evil practices which had

### 32 A Brief History of Modern India

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements 33

crept into it. Roy's progressive ideas met with strong opposition from orthodox elements like Raja Radhakant Deb who organized the Dharma Sabha to counter Brahmo Samaj propaganda. Roy's death in 1833 was a setback for the Samaj's mission.

Maharishi Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), father of Rabindranath Tagore and a product of the best traditional Indian learning and western thought, gave a new life to Brahma Samaj and a definite form and shape to the theist movement, when he joined the Samaj in 1842. Earlier, Tagore headed the Tattvabodhini Sabha (founded in 1839) which, along with its organ Tattvabodhini Pat fika in Bengali, was devoted to the systematic study of India's past with a rational outlook and to the propagation of Roy's ideas. A new vitality and strength of membership came to be associated with the Brahma Samaj due to the informal association of the two sabhas. Gradually, the Brahma Samaj came to include prominent followers of Roy, the Derozians and independent thinkers such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Ashwini Kumar Datta. worked on two the Brahma movement- outside it resolutely oosed the Christian missionaries for their criticism of the Hinduism and their attempts at conversion. Thei-evitalised Samaj supporiea-Wi-d-ow remarriarrTeiys education, abolition of improvement in ryots' conditions and temperence.

The Bramho Samaj experienced another phase of energy, vigour and eloquence when Keshub Chandra Sen was made the acharyct by Debendranath Tagore soon after the former joined the Samaj in 1858. Keshub was instrumental in popularising the movement, and branches of the Samaj were opened outside Bengal in the United Provinces, Punjab, Bombay, Madras and other towns. Unfortunately, Debendranath did not like some of . Sen's ideas which he found too radical, such as cosmopolitanisation of the Samaj's meetings by inclusion of teachings from all religions and his strong views against the caste system, even open support to inter-caste marriages. Keshub Chandra Sen was dismissed from the office of acharya in 1865. Keshub and his followers founded the Brahmo Samaj of India in 1866, while Debendranath Tagore's Sarnaj came to be known as the Adi Brahmo Samaj.

In 1878, Keshub's inexplicable act of getting his thirteenyear-old daughter married with the minor Hindu Maharaja of Cooch-Behar with all, the orthodox Hindu rituals caused another split in Keshub's Brahma Samaj of India. Earlier, Keshub had begun to be considered as an incarnation by some of his followers, much to the dislike of his progressive followers. Further, Keshub had begun to be accused of authoritarianism. After 1878, the disgusted followers of Keshub set up a new organisation, the Sadharan Brahma Samaj.

A number of Brahmo centres were opened in Madras state. In Punjab, the Dayal Singh Trust sought to implant Brahmo ideas by, the opening of Dayal Singh College at Lahore in 1910.

According to H.C.E. Zacharias, "Raja Rammohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj form the starting point for all the various reform movements—whether in Hindu religion, society or politics—which have agitated modern India." The overall contribution of Brahmo Samaj may be summed thus—

- (i) it denounced polytheism and idol worship;
- (ii) it discarded faith in divine avatars (incarnations);
- (iii) it denied that any scripture could enjoy the status of ultimate authority transcending/ human reason and conscience;
- (iv) it took no definite stand on the doctrine of; karma and transmigration of soul and left it to- individual Brahmos to believe either way;
- (iv) it criticised the caste system. In matters of social reform, the Samaj attacked many dogmas and superstitions. It condemned the prevailing Hindu prejudice against going abroad. It worked for a respectable status for women in society—condemned sati, worked for abolition, of purdah system, discouraged child marriages and polygamy, crusaded for widow remarriage and for provisions

#### 34 A Brief History of Modern India

of educational facilities, etc. It also attacked casteism and untouchability though in these matters it attained only limited success.

Prarthana Samaj In 1863, Keshub Chandra Seri helped found the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay. Earlier, the Brahmo ideas spread in Maharashtra where the Paramhansa Sabha was founded in 1849. Here the emphasis was on monotheism, on 'works' rather than on faith. They relied on education and persuasion and not on confrontation with Hindu orthodoxy. There was a four-point social agenda also: (i) disapproval of caste system, (ii) women's education, (iii) widow remarriage, and (iv) raising the age of marriage for both males and females. The Prarthana Samaj had as its prominent leaders Mahadeo Govind Ranade (1842-1901), R.G. Bhandarkar (1837-1925) and N.G. Chandavarkar (1855-1923).

Young Bengal Movement and Henry Vivian Derozio (1809-31) During the late 1820s and early 1830s, there emerged a radical, intellectual trend among the youth in Bengal, which came to be known as the 'Young Bengal Movement'. A young Anglo-Indian, Henry Vivian Derozio, who taught at the Hindu College from 1826 to 1831, was the leader and inspirer of this progressive trend. Drawing inspiration from the great French Revolution, Derozio inspired his pupils to think freely and rationally, question all authority, love liberty, equality and freedom, and oppose decadent customs and traditions. The Derozians also supported women's rights and education. Also, Derozio was perhaps the first nationalist poet of modern India.

The Derozians, however, failed to have a long-term impact. Derozio was removed from the Hindu College in 1831 because of his radicalism. The

main reason for their limited success was the prevailing social conditions at that time, which were not ripe for the adoption of radical ideas. Further, support from any other social group or class was absent. The Derozians lacked any real link with the masses; for instance, they failed to take up the peasants' cause. In fact, their radicalism was bookish in character. But, despite their

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements 35

limitations, the Derozians carried forward Roy's tradition of public education on social, economic and political questions. For instance, they demanded induction of Indians in higher grades of services, protection of ryots from oppressive zamindars, better treatment to Indian labour abroad in British colonies, revision of the Company's charter, freedom of press and trial by jury.

Later, Surendranath Banerjee was to describe the Derozians as "the pioneers of the modern civilisation of Bengal, the conscript fathers of our race whose virtues will excite veneration and whose failings will be treated with gentlest consideration".

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar The great scholar and reformer, Vidyasagar's ideas were a happy blend of Indian and western thought. He believed in high moral values, was a deep humanist and was generous to the poor. In 1850, he became the principal of Sanskrit College. He was determined to break the priestly monopoly of scriptural knowledge, and for this he opened the Sanskrit College to non-brahmins. He introduced western thought in Sanskrit College to break the self-imposed isolation of Sanskrit learning. Also, as an academician, he evolved a new methodology to teach Sanskrit. He also devised a new Bengali primer and evolved a new prose style.

Vidyasagar started a movement in support of widow remarriage which resulted in legalisation of widow remarriage. He was also a crusader against child marriage and polygamy. He did much for the cause of women's education. As government inspector of schools, he helped organize thirtyfive girls' schools many of which he ran at his own expense. As secretary of Bethune School (established in 1849), he was one of the pioneers of higher education for women in India.

The Bethune School, founded in Calcutta, was the first fruit of the powerful movement for women's education that arose in the 1840s and 1850s. The movement had to face great difficulties. The young students were shouted at and abused and sometimes even their parents subjected to social boycott.

#### 36 A Brief History of Modern India

Many believed that girls who had received western education would make slaves of their husbands.

Bal Shastri Jambekar One of the pioneers in Bombay, he attacked brahminical orthodoxy and tried to reform popular Hinduism He started the weekly Darpan in 1832,



Students' Literary and Scientific Societies Also called the Gyan Prasarak Mandalis they had two branches—Marathi and Gujarati—and were formed by some educated young men in 1848. These Mandalis organized lectures on popular sciences and social questions. One of their aims was to start schools for girls.

Paramhansa Mandalis Founded in 1849 in Maharashtra, the founders of these Mandalis believed in one God. They were primarily interested in breaking caste rules. At their meetings food cooked by lower caste people was taken by the members. These Mandalis also advocated widow remarriage and women's education. Branches of Paramhansa Mandalis existed in Poona, Satara and other towns of Maharashtra.

Satyashodhak Samaj and Jyotiba Phule  
Jyotiba Phule belonged to the Mali (gardener) community and organized a powerful movement against upper caste domination and brahminical supremacy. Phule founded the Satyashodhak Samaj (Truth Seekers' Society) in 1873, with the leadership of the Samaj coming from the backward classes, Malis, Telis, Kunbis, Saris and Dhangars. The main aims of the movement were (i) social service, and (ii) spread of education among women and lower caste people. Phule's works, Sarvajanic Satyadharma and Gulamgin, became sources of inspiration for the common masses. Phule used the symbol of Rajah Bali as opposed to the, brahmins' symbol of Rama. Phule aimed at the complete abolition of the caste system and socio-economic inequalities; he was against Sanskrit Hinduism. This movement gave a sense of identity to the depressed communities as a class against the brahmins, who were seen as the exploiters. Phule opened, with the help of his wife, a girls' school at Poona and was a pioneer of, widow remarriage movement in Maharashtra.

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements 37

Gopalhari Deshmukh Lokahitawadi, He advocated a reorganisation of Indian society on rational principles and modern, humanistic, . secular values. He attacked Hindu orthodoxy and supported social and religious equality. He said, "If religion does not sanction social reform, then change religion."

Gopal Ganesh Agarkar A strong advocate of the power of human reason, he criticised from the blind dependence on tradition and false glorification of the past.

The Servants of India Society Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the liberal leader of Indian National Congress, founded the Servants of India Society in 1905. The aim of the society was to train national missionaries for the service of India; to promote, by all constitutional means, the, true interests of the Indian people; and to prepare a cadre of selfless workers who were to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit. After Gokhale's death (1915), Srinivasa Shastri took over as president:

Social Service League Another Gokhale follower Narayan Malhar Joshi founded the Social Service League in Bombay with an aim to secure for

the masses better and reasonable conditions of life and work They organized many schools, libraries, reading rooms, day nurseries and cooperative societies. Their activities also included police court agents' work, legal aid and advice to the poor and illiterate, excursions for slum dwellers, facilities for gymnasia and theatrical performances, sanitary work, medical relief and boys' clubs and scout corps. Joshi also founded the All India Trade Union (1920).

The Ramakrishna Movement The didactic nationalism of the Brahma Samaj appealed more to the intellectual elite in Bengal, while the average Bengali found more emotional satisfaction in the cult of bhakti and yoga. The teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1834-86), a poor priest at the Kali temple in Dakshineswar, Calcutta, formed the basis of the Ramakrishna Movement. Two objectives of the movement were-(i) to bring into existence a band of monks dedicated

### 38            A Brief History of Modern India

to a life of renunciation and practical spirituality, from among whom teachers and workers would be sent out to spread the universal message of Vedanta as illustrated in the life of Ramakrishna, and (ii) in conjunction with lay disciples to carry on preaching, philanthropic and charitable works, looking tapon all men, women and children, irrespective of caste, creed or colour, as veritable manifestations of the Divine. Parainhansa himself founded the Ramakrishna Math with his young monastic disciples as a nucleus to fulfil the first objective. The second objective was taken up by Swami Vivekananda after Ramakrishna's death when he founded the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897. The headquarters of the Mission are at Belur near Calcutta.

Paramhansa sought salvation through traditional ways of renunciation, meditation and bhakti amidst increasing westernisation and modernisation. He recognised the fundamental oneness of all religions and emphasised that Krishna, Hari, Ram, Christ, Allah are different names for the same God, and that there are many ways to God and salvation. Paramhansa's spirituality and compassion for the suffering humanity inspired those who listened to him. He used to say, "Service of man is the, service of God."

Narendranath Datta (1862-1902), who later came to be known as Swami Vivekananda spread Ramakrishna's message and tried to reconcile it to the needs of contemporary Indian society. He emerged as the preacher of neo-Hinduism. Certain spiritual experiences of Ramakrishna, the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita and the examples, of the Buddha and Jesus are the basis of Vivekananda's message to the world about human values. He subscribed to the Vedanta which he considered a fully rational system with a superior approach. His mission was to bridge the gulf between ararnartha (service) and vyavahara (behaviour), and between spirituality believed in the fundamental oneness of God and said, "For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam, is the only hope." Emphasising social action, he declared that knowledge without

## Religious and Social Reform Movements 39

action is useless. He lamented the isolationist tendencies and the touch-me-not attitude of Hindus in religious matters. He frowned at religion's tacit approval of the oppression of the poor by the rich. He believed that it was an insult to God and humanity to teach religion to a starving man. He called upon his countrymen to imbibe a spirit of liberty, equality and free thinking.

Vivekananda was a great humanist and used the Ramakrishna Mission for humanitarian relief and social work. The Mission stands for religious and social reform. Vivekananda advocated the doctrine of service—the service of all beings.

is itself is religion. service, the Divine exists within man. Vivekananda was for using technology and modern science in the service of mankind. Ever since its inception, the Mission has been running a number of societies. It offers help to the affected of calamities like famines, floods and epidemics. a worldwide organisation. It is a deeply religious body, but it is not a proselytising body. It does not consider itself to be a sect of Hinduism. In fact, this is one of the strong reasons for the success of the Mission. Unlike the Arya Samaj, the Mission recognises the utility and value of image worship in developing spiritual fervour and worship of the eternal omnipotent God, although it emphasises the essential spirit and not the symbols or rituals. It believes that the philosophy of Vedanta will make a Christian a better Christian, and a Hindu a better Hindu.

At the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, Swami Vivekananda made a great impression on people by his learned interpretations. The keynote of his opening address was the need for a healthy balance between spiritualism and materialism. Envisaging a new culture for the whole world, he called for a blend of the materialism of the West and the spiritualism of the East into a new harmony to produce happiness for mankind.

Vivekananda never gave a political message; still, he

## 40 A Brief History of Modern India

### Religious and Social Reform Movements

41

infused into the new generation a sense of pride in India's past, a new faith in India's culture, and a rare sense of confidence in India's future. His emphasis was not only on personal salvation, but also on social, good and reform. About his place in modern Indian history, Subhash Bose wrote: "So far as Bengal is concerned Vivekananda may be regarded as the spiritual father of the modern nationalist movement."

### Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj

The Arya Samaj Movement, revivalist in form though not in content, was the result of a reaction to western influences. Its founder, Dayanand. Saraswati (or Mulshankar, 1824-83) was born in the old Morvi state in

Gujarat in a brahmin family. He wandered as an ascetic for fifteen years (1845-60) in search of truth. The first Arya Samaj unit was formally set up by him at Bombay in 1875 and later the headquarters of the Samaj were established at Lahore.

Dayanand's views were published in his famous work, *Satyarth Prakash* (The True Exposition). Dayanand's vision of India included a classless and casteless society, a united India (religiously, socially and nationally), and an India free from foreign rule, with Aryan religion being the common religion of all. He took inspiration from the Vedas and considered them to be "India's Rock of Ages", the infallible and the true original seed of Hinduism. He gave the slogan "Back to the Vedas". He had received education on Vedanta from a blind teacher named Swami Virajananda in Mathura. Along with his emphasis on Vedic authority, he stressed the significance of individual interpretation of the scriptures and said that every person has the right of access to God. He criticised later Hindu scriptures such as the Puranas and the ignorant priests for perverting Hinduism. Dayanand launched a frontal attack on Hindu orthodoxy, caste rigidities, untouchability, idolatry, polytheism, belief in magic, charms and animal sacrifices, taboo on sea voyages, feeding the dead through shraddhas, etc. Dayanand subscribed to the Vedic notion of chaturvarna system in which a person was not born in any caste but was identified as a brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya or shudra according to the occupation the person followed.

The Samaj fixed the minimum marriageable age at twenty-five years for boys and sixteen years for girls. Swami once lamented the Hindu race as "the children of children". Intercaste marriages and widow remarriages were also encouraged. Equal status for women was the demand of the Samaj, both in letter and in spirit. The Samaj also helped the people in crises like floods, famines and earthquakes. It attempted to give a new direction to education. The nucleus for this movement was provided by the Dayanand AngloVedic (D.A.V.) schools, established first at Lahore in 1886, which sought to emphasise the importance of western education. Swami Shraddhanand started the Gurukul at Hardwar in 1902 to impart education in the traditional framework.

Dayanand strongly criticised the escapist Hindu belief in *maya* (illusion) as the running theme of all physical existence and the aim of human life as a struggle to attain *moksha* (salvation) through escape from this evil world to seek union with God. Instead, he advocated that God, soul and matter (*prakriti*) were distinct and every individual is the *eterna* trinci•les overni human coffin. He attacked the prevalent popular belief that every individual contributed and got back from the society according to the principles of *niyati* (destiny) and *karma* (deeds). He held the world to be a battlefield where every individual has to *salyanon* should be clearly understood that Dayanand's slogan of 'Back to the Vedas' was a call for a revival of Vedic learning and Vedic purity of religion and not a revival of Vedic times. He accepted modernity and displayed a patriotic attitude to national problems.

The ten guiding principles of the Arya Samaj are—

- (i) God is the primary source of all true knowledge;
- (ii) God, as all-truth, all-knowledge, almighty, immortal, creator of Universe, is alone worthy of worship;
- (iii) the Vedas are the right guides, and that human beings are controlled by

#### 42            A Brief History of Modern India

books of true knowledge;

- (iv) an Arya should always be ready to accept truth and abandon untruth;
- (v) dharma, that is, due consideration of right and wrong, should be the guiding principle of all actions;
- (vi) the principal aim of the Samaj is to promote world's well-being in the material, spiritual and social sense;
- (vii) everybody should be treated with love and justice;
- (viii) ignorance is to be dispelled and knowledge increased;
- (ix) one's own progress should depend on uplift of all others;
- (x) social well-being of mankind is to be placed above an individual's well-being.

The Arya Samaj's social ideals comprise, among others, the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of Man, equality of all sexes, absolute justice and fairplay between man and man and nation and nation. Dayanand also met other reformers of the time, Keshub Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ranade, Deshmukh, etc. The work of the Swami after his death was carried forward by Lala Hansraj, Pandit Gurudutt, Lala Lajpat Rai and Swami Shraddhanand, among others.

The Arya Samaj was able to give self-respect and selfconfidence to the Hindus which helped to undermine the myth of superiority of whites and the western culture. In its zeal to protect the Hindu society from the onslaught of Christianity and Islam, the Samaj started the shuddhi (purification) movement to reconvert to Hindu fold the converts to Christianity and Islam. This led to increasing communalisation of social life during the 1920s and later snowballed into communal political consciousness.

#### Seva Sadan

A Parsi social reformer, M. Malabari, founded the Seva Sadan in 1885. The organisation specialised in taking care of use women who were exploited and then discarded by society. It catered to all castes and women with education, medical and welfare services.

Deva Samaj Founded in 1887 at Lahore by Shiv Narain Agnihotri, this sect emphasised of the soul, the supremacy of the guru, and the need for good action. It

called for an ideal social behaviour such as not accepting bribes, avoiding intoxicants and non-vegetarian and keeping away from violent actions. Its teachings were corn fed

#### Dharma Sabha

Radhakant Deb founded this sabha in 1830. An orthodox society, it stood for the preservation of the status quo in socio-religious matters, opposing even the abolition of sati. However, it favoured western education, even for girls.

#### Bharat Dharma

Mahamandala An all-India organisation of the orthodox educated Hindus, it stood for a defence of orthodox Hinduism against the teachings of the Arya Samaj, the Theosophists, and the Ramakrishna Mission. Other organisations created to defend orthodox Hinduism were the Sanatana Dharma Sabha (1895), the Dharma Maha Parishad in South India, and. Dharma Mahamandali in Bengal. These organisations combined in 1902 to form the single organisation of Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, with headquarters at Varanasi. This organisation sought to introduce proper management of Hindu religious institutions, open Hindu educational institutions, etc. Pandit Madan -Mohan Malaviya was a prominent figure in this movement.

#### Radhaswami Movement

Tulsi Ram, a banker from Agra, also known as Shiv DayalSaheb, founded this movement in 1861. The R. d. i, one supreme being supremacy of the Spiritual attainment, they believe does not call for renunciation of the worldly life. They consider all religions to be true. While the sect has no belief in temples, shrines and sacred places, it considers as necessary duties, works of faith and charity, service and prayer.

Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Movement This movement was an example of a regional movement born out of conflict between the depressed, classes and upper non-Brahmin castes. It was started by. Sri Narayana, Guru Swamy among the Ezhavas of Kerala, who were a caste

#### 44 A Brief History of Modern India

of toddy-tappers and were considered to be untouchables. The Ezhavas were the single largest caste group in Kerala constituting 26 per cent of the total population. Sri Narayana Guru initiated a programme of action-the Sri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) began in 1902. The SNDP took of admission to public schools uitment to :government services, (iii) access to roads and entriliesz. The movement as a whole brought transformative structural changes such as upward social mobility, shift in traditional distribution of power and a federation of 'backward castes' into a large conglomeration.

#### Vokkaliga Sangha

This Sangha in Mysore launched an anti-brahmin movement in 1905.

#### Justice Movement

This movement in Madras Presidency was started by C.N. Mudaliar, T.M. Nair and P. Tyagaraja to secure jobs and representation for the non-



brahmins in the legislature. In 1917, Madras Presidency Association was formed which demanded separate representation for the lower castes in the legislature.

#### Self-Respect Movement

This movement was started by E.V. Ramaswamiyar, a Balija Naidu, in the mid-1920s. The movement aimed at nothing short of a rejection of the brahmanical religion and culture which Naicker felt was the prime instrument of exploitation of the lower castes. He sought to undermine the position of brahmin priests by formalising weddings without brahmin priests.

#### Aravippuram Movement

On the occasion of Sivarathri in 1888, Sri Narayana Guru, despite belonging to a lower caste, installed an idol of Siva at Aravippuram in Kerala in his effort to show that the consecration of a god's image was not a monopoly of the brahmins. On the wall of the temple he got inscribed the words, "Devoid of dividing walls of caste or race, or hatred of rival faith, we all live here in brotherhood." The event inspired several socio-religious reform movements in the South, especially the Temple Entry Movement.

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements

45

#### Temple Entry Movement

Significant work in this direction had already been done by reformers and intellectuals like Sri Narayana Guru, N. Kumaran Asan, T.K. Madhavan etc. In 1924, Vaikom Satyagraha led by K.P. Kesava, was launched in Kerala demanding the throwing open of Hindu temples and roads to the untouchables. The satyagraha was reinforced by jathas from Punjab and Madurai. Gandhi undertook a tour of Kerala in support of the movement.

Again in 1931 when the Civil Disobedience Movement was suspended, temple entry movement was organized in Kerala. Inspired by K. Kelappan, poet Subramaniam Tirurnambu (the 'singing sword of Kerala') led a group of sixteen volunteers to Guruvayur. Leaders like P. Krishna Pillai and A.K. Gopalan were among the satyagrahis. Finally, in 1936 the Maharaja of Travancore issued a proclamation throwing open all government-controlled temples to all Hindus. A similar step was taken by the C. Rajagopalachari administration in Madras in 1938.

Indian Social Conference Founded by M.G. Ranade and Raghunath Rao, the conference met annually from its first session in Madras in 1887 at the same time and venue as the Indian National Congress. It focussed attention on the social issues of importance; it could be called the social reform cell of the Indian National Congress, in fact. The conference advocated inter-caste marriages, opposed polygamy and kulinism. It launched the "Pledge Movement" to inspire people to take a pledge against child marriage.

Wahabi/Walliullah Movement Shah Waliullah (1702-62) inspired this essentially revivalist response to western influences and the degeneration which had set in among Indian Muslims. He was the first Indian Muslim leader of the 18th century to organize Muslims around the

two-fold ideals of this movement: (i) desirability of harmony among the four schools of Muslim jurisprudence which had divided the Indian Muslims (he sought to integrate the best elements of the four schools); (ii) recognition of the role of individual conscience in religion

46 A Brief History of Modern India

where conflicting interpretations were derived from the Quran and the Hadis.

The teachings of Walliullah were further popularised by Shah Abdul Aziz and Syed Ahmed Bareilvi who also gave them a political perspective. India was considered to be dar-ul-Harb (land of the kafirs) and it needed to be converted to dar-ul-Islam (land of Islam). Initially the movement was directed at Sikhs in Punjab but after the British annexation of Punjab (1849), the movement was directed against the British. The movement fizzled out in the face of British military might in the 1870s.

Titu Mir's Movement

Mir Nithar Ali, popularly known as Titu Mir, was a disciple of Sayyid Ahmed Raebareilvi, the founder of the Wahabi Movement. Titu Mir organized the Muslim peasants of Bengal against the Hindu landlords and the British indigo planters. The movement was not as militant as the British records made it out to be; only in the last year of Titu's life was there a confrontation between him and the British police. He was killed in action in 1831.

Faraizi Movement

The movement, also called the Fara'idi Movement because of its emphasis on the Islamic pillars of faith, was founded by Haji Shariat-Allah. Its scene of action was East Bengal, and it aimed at the eradication of social innovations current among the Muslims of the region. Under the leadership of Haji's son, Dudu Mian, the movement became revolutionary from 1840 onwards. He gave the movement an organisational system from the village to the provincial level with a khalifa or authorised deputy at every level. The Fara'idis organized a paramilitary forces armed with clubs to fight the Hindu landlords and even the police. Dudu Mian was arrested several times, and his arrest in 1847 finally weakened the movement. The movement survived merely as a religious movement without political overtones after the death of Dudu Mian in 1862.

Ahmadiya Movement

This movement was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmed in 1889. It was based on liberal

Religious and Social Reform Movements

47

principles. It described itself as the standard-bearer of Mohammedan Renaissance, and based itself, like the Brahmo Samaj, on the principles of universal religion of all humanity, opposing jihad (sacred war against non-Muslims). The movement spread western liberal education among the Indian Muslims. However, the Ahmadiya Movement, like Baha'ism which flourished in the West Asian countries, suffered from mysticism.

### Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the Aligarh Movement

The official view on the revolt of 1857 held the Muslims to be the main conspirators. This view was further strengthened by the activities of the Wahabis. But later, an opinion got currency among the rulers that the Muslims could be used as allies against a rising tide of nationalist political activity represented, among others, by the foundation of the Indian National Congress. This was to be achieved through offers of thoughtful concessions to the Muslims. A section of Muslims led by Syed Ahmed Khan was ready to allow the official patronage to stimulate a process of growth among Indian Muslims through better education and employment opportunities.

Syed Ahmed Khan, born in 1817 in a respectable Muslim family, was a loyalist member of the judicial service of the Government. After retirement in 1876, he became a member of the Imperial Legislative Council in 1878. His loyalty earned him a knighthood in 1888. He wanted to reconcile western scientific education with the teachings of the Quran to be interpreted in the light of contemporary rationalism and science even though he also held the Quran to be the ultimate. He said that religion, should be adaptable with time or else it would become fossilised, and that religious tenets were not immutable. He advocated a critical approach and freedom of thought and no dependence on tradition or custom. He was also a zealous educationist—as an official, he opened schools in towns, got books translated into Urdu and started the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875. He also struggled to bring about an improvement in the position of women through better education by

### 48 A Brief History of Modern India

opposing purdah and polygamy, advocating easy divorce, and condemning the system of piri and muridi. He believed in the fundamental underlying unity of religions or 'practical morality'. He also preached the basic commonality of Hindu and Muslim interests.

He argued that Muslims should first concentrate on education and jobs and try to catch up with their Hindu counterparts who had gained the advantage of an early start. Active participation in politics at that point, he felt, would invite hostility of the Government towards the Muslim masses. Therefore, he opposed political activity by the Muslims. Unfortunately, in his enthusiasm to promote the educational and employment interests of the Muslims, he allowed himself to be used by the colonial government in its obnoxious policy of divide and rule and, in later years, started propagating divergence of interests of Hindus and Muslims.

Syed's progressive social ideas were propagated through his magazine Tandhib-ul-Akhlaq (Improvement of Manners and Morals).

The Aligarh Movement emerged as a liberal, modern trend among the Muslim intelligentsia based in Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh. It aimed at spreading (i) modern education among Indian Muslims without weakening their allegiance to Islam; (ii) social reforms among Muslims

relating to purdah, polygamy, widow remarriage, women's education, slavery, divorce, etc. The ideology of the followers of the movement was based on a liberal interpretation of the Quran and they sought to harmonise Islam with modern liberal culture. They wanted to impart a distinct socio-cultural identity to Muslims on modern lines. Soon, Aligarh became the centre of religious and cultural revival of the Muslim community.

The Deoband School

The Deoband Movement was organized by the orthodox section among the Muslim ulema as a revivalist movement with the twin objectives of propagating pure teachings of the Quran and Hadis among Muslims and keeping alive the spirit of jihad against the foreign rulers.

Religious and Social Reform Movements

49

The Deoband Movement was established in Deoband in Saharanpur district (United Provinces) in 1866 by Mohammad Qasim Nanotavi (1832-80) and Rashid Ahmed, Gangohi (1828-1905) to train religious leaders for the revival of the Muslim community.

In contrast to the Ahmadi movement, the lack of Muslim support through western education and support of the British Government, the aim of the Deoband Movement was moral and religious regeneration of the Muslim community. The instruction imparted at Deoband was in original Islamic religion.

On the political front, the Deoband school welcomed the formation of the Indian National Congress and in 1888 issued a fatwa (religious decree) against Syed Ahmed Khan's organisations, The United Patriotic Association and the Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental Association. Some critics attribute Deoband's support to the nationalists more to its determined opposition to Syed Ahmed Khan than to any positive political philosophy.

Mahmud-ul-Hasan, the new Deoband leader, gave a political and intellectual content to the religious ideas of the school. He worked out a synthesis of Islamic principles and nationalist aspirations. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema gave a concrete shape to Hasan's ideas of protection of the religious and political rights of the Muslims in the overall context of Indian unity and national objectives.

Shibli Numani, a supporter of the Deoband school, favoured the inclusion of English language and European sciences in the system of education. He founded the Nadwatul Ulama and Darul Uloom in Lucknow in 1894-96. He believed in the idealism of the Congress and cooperation between the Muslims and Hindus of India to create a state in which both could live amicably.

Parsi Reform Movements

The Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha (Religious Reform Association) was founded in 1851 by a group of English-educated Parsis for the "regeneration of the social conditions of the Parsis and the restoration of the Zoroastrian religion to its pristine purity". The movement had

## 50        A Brief History of Modern India

### Religious and Social Reform Movements 51

Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji, K.R. Carna and S.S. Bengalee as its leaders. The message of reform was spread by the newspaper Rast Goftar (Truth-Teller). Parsi religious rituals and practices were reformed and the Parsi creed redefined. In the social sphere, attempts were made to uplift the status of Parsi women through removal of the purdah system, raising the age of marriage and education. Gradually, the Parsis emerged as the most westernised section of the Indian society.

### Sikh Reform Movements

The Sikh community could not remain untouched by the rising tide of rationalist and progressive ideas of the nineteenth century. The Singh Sabha Movement was founded at Amritsar in 1873 with a two-fold objective--(i) to make available modern western education to the Sikhs, and (ii) to counter the proselytising activities of Christian missionaries as well as Hindu revivalists. For the first objective, a network of Khalsa schools was established by the Sabha throughout Punjab. The Akali movement was an offshoot of the Singh Sabha Movement. It aimed at liberating the Sikh gurudwaras from the control of corrupt Udasi Mahants who were a loyalist and reactionary lot, enjoying government patronage. The Government tried its repressive policies against the non-violent non-cooperation satyagraha launched by the Akalis in 1921, but had to bow before popular demands and passed the Sikh Gurudwaras Act in 1922 (amended in 1925) which gave the control of gurudwaras to the Sikh masses to be administered through Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) as the apex body.

The Akali Movement was a regional movement but not a communal one. The Akali leaders played a notable role in the national liberation struggle though some dissenting voices were heard occasionally.

### The Theosophical Movement

A group of westerners led by Madame H.P. Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Colonel M.S. who were inspired by Indian thought and culture, founded the Theosophical Society in United States in 1875.

In 1882, they shifted their headquarters to Adayar, on the outskirts of Madras. The society believed that a special relationship could be established between a person's soul and Gay contemplation, Ri-ayer, revelation, etc. It accepted the Hindu beliefs in reincarnation and karma, and drew inspiration from the philosophy of the Upanishads and samkhya, yoga and Vedanta schools of thought. It aimed to work for universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. The society also sought to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. The

Theosophical Movement came to be allied with the Hindu renaissance. In India, the movement became somewhat popular with the election of Annie Besant (1847-1933) as its president after the death of Olcott in 1907. Annie Besant had come to India in 1893. She laid the foundation of the Central Hindu College in Benaras in 1898 where both Hindu religion and

western scientific subjects were taught. The college became the nucleus for the formation of Benaras Hindu University in 1916. Annie Besant also did much for the cause of the education of women.

The Theosophical Society provided a common denominator for the various sects and fulfilled the urge of educated Hindus. However, to an average Indian the Theosophist philosophy seemed to be vague and lacking a positive programme; to that extent its impact was limited to a small segment of the westernised class. As religious revivalists, the Theosophists did not attain much success, but as a movement of westerners glorifying Indian religious and philosophical traditions they gave much needed self-respect to the Indians fighting British colonial rule. Viewed from another angle, the Theosophists also had the effect of giving a false sense of pride to the Indians in their outdated and sometimes backwardlooking traditions and philosophy.

#### POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

OF REFORM MOVEMENTS The orthodox sections of society could not accept the scientific ideological onslaught of the socio-religious rebels. As a result

#### 52            A Brief History of Modern India

of this, the reformers were subjected to abuse, persecution, issuing of fatwas and even assassination attempts by the reactionaries.

However, in spite of opposition, these movements contributed towards liberation of the individual from the conformity born out of fear and from uncritical submission to exploitation by the priests. The translation of religious texts into vernacular languages, emphasis on an individual's right to interpret, the scriptural simplification of rituals experience. The movement emphasised the human intellect's capacity to think and reason. It weeded out corrupt elements, religious leaders and praesides,

the reformers enabled their followers to meet the official taunt that their religion was ancient and inflexible. It gave the rising middle classes the much needed to cling to, and served the purpose of reducing the sense of humiliation which the conquest by a foreign power had produced.

A realisation of the special needs of modern times, especially in terms of scientific knowledge, and thus promoting a modern, this-worldly, secular and rational outlook was a major contribution of these reform movements. Socially, this attitude reflected in a basic change in the notions of 'pollution and purity'. Although traditional values and customs were a prominent target of attack from the reformers, yet the reformers aimed at modernisation rather than outright westernisation based on blind imitation of alien western cultural values. In fact, the reform movements sought to create a favourable social climate for modernisation. To that extent, these movements ended India's cultural and intellectual isolation from the rest of the world. The reformers argued that modern ideas and culture could be best imbibed by integrating them into Indian cultural streams.

The underlying concern of these reformist efforts was revival of the native cultural personality which had got distorted by colonial domination. This cultural ideological struggle was to prove to be an important instrument of

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements 53

evolution of national consciousness and a part of Indian national resolve to resist colonial cultural and ideological hegemony. However, not all these progressive, nationalist tendencies were able to outgrow the sectarian and obscurantist outlook. This was, possibly due to divergent duality of cultural and political struggles, resulting in cultural backwardness despite political advancement.

#### NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF REFORM MOVEMENTS

One of the major limitations of these religious reform movements was that they had a narrow social base, namely the educated and urban middle classes, while the needs of vast masses of peasantry and the urban poor were ignored.

The tendency of reformers to appeal to the greatness of the past and, to rely on scriptural authority encouraged mysticism in new garbs and fostered pseudo-scientific thinking while exercising a check on full acceptance of the need for a modern scientific outlook. But, above all, these tendencies contributed, at least to some extent, in compartmentalising Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Parsis, as also alienating high caste Hindus from low caste Hindus.

An overemphasis on religious and philosophical, as aspects of heritage, got somewhat magnified by insufficient emphasis on other aspects of culture—art, architecture, literature, music, science and technology. To make matters worse, the Hindu reformers co their praise of the Indian past to its ancient period and looked upon the medieval period of Indian history essentially as an era of decadence. This tended to create a notion of two separate peoples, on the one hand; on the other, an uncritical praise of the past was not acceptable to the low caste sections of society which had suffered under religiously sanctioned exploitation precisely during the ancient period. Moreover, the past itself tended to be placed into compartments on a partisan basis. Many in the Muslim middle classes went to the extent of turning to, the history of West Asia for their traditions and moments of pride.

#### 54        A Brief History of Modern India

The process of evolution of a composite culture which was evident throughout Indian history showed signs of being arrested with the rise of another form of consciousness—communal consciousness—along with national consciousness among the middle classes.

Many other factors were certainly responsible for the birth of communalism in modern times, but undoubtedly the nature of religious reform movements also contributed to it. On the whole, however, whatever

the net outcome of these reform movements, it was out of this struggle that a new society evolved in India.

#### Views

I regret to say that, the present system of religion adhered by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests. it is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort, Raja Rammohan Roy.

No other religion preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism and no other religion on earth treads upon the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism, Swami Vivekananda.

A country where millions have nothing to eat and where few thousand holy men and brahmins suck the blood of the poor and do nothing at all for them, is not a country but a living hell. Is this religion or a dance of death? Swami Vivekananda.

Nationalist power to stir up discontent would be immensely increased if every cultivator could read, Bombay Governor, in a private letter to the Viceroy (1911).

The rising middle classes were politically inclined and were not so much in search of a religion; but they wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, that would reduce the sense of frustration and humiliation that foreign conquest and rule had produced, Jawaharlal Nehru.

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements 55

The dead and the buried are dead, buried and burnt once for all and the dead past cannot, therefore, be revived except by a reformation of the old materials into new organized forms. Mahadeo Govind Ranade

Unfortunately, no brahmin scholar has so far come forward to play the part of a Voltaire who had the intellectual honesty to rise against the doctrines of the Catholic church on which he was brought up. A Voltaire among the brahmins would be a positive danger to the maintenance of a civilisation which is contrived to maintain brahminic supremacy. B.R. Ambedkar

Untouchability question is one of life and death for Hinduism, if untouchability lives, Hinduism perishes, and even India perishes; but if untouchability is eradicated from the Hindu heart, root and branch, then Hinduism has a definite message for the world. M.K. Gandhi

Whoever worships the True God daily must learn to recognise all his fellow countrymen as brethren. Keshub Chandra Sen

Forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers.  
Swami Vivekananda



I want the culture of all lands to be blown about 'my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave. M.K. Gandhi

#### Summary

##### FACTORS WHICH GAVE RISE TO REFORM MOVEMENTS

Presence of colonial government on Indian soil.

Various ills plaguing Indian society—obscurantism, superstition, polytheism, idolatry, degraded position of women, exploitative caste hierarchy.

Spread of education and increased awareness of the world.

Impact of modern western culture and consciousness of defeat by a foreign power.

#### 56 A Brief History of Modern India

#### Religious and Social Reform Movements 57

#### Summary

Rising :tide of nationalism and democracy during the late 19th century.

##### SOCIAL BASE

Emerging middle class and western-educated intellectuals.

##### IDEOLOGICAL BASE

Rationalism, religious universalism, humanism, secularism.

##### SOCIAL REFORM COMPONENTS

Betterment of Position of Women

Degraded position due to Purdah system    Early marriage    Lack of education

Unequal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance

Polygamy

Female infanticide

Restrictions on widow remarriage

Sati

#### Major Contributors to Reforms

Social reform movements,

freedom struggle,

movements led by enlightened women,

free India's Constitution.

#### Legislative Measures for Women

Bengal Regulation (1829) banning sati

Bengal Regulations (1795, 1804)—declaring infanticide illegal.

Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856.

Age of Consent Act, 1891

Sarda Act, 1930

Special Marriage Act, 1954

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

Hindu Succession Act, 1956

Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act    Maternity Benefits Act, 1961  
Equal Remuneration Act, 1976  
Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act, 1978  
Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act in Women and Girls, 1956    (amended in 1986)  
Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (amended in 1986)

#### STRUGGLE AGAINST CASTE-BASED EXPLOITATION

Factors Undermining Caste Rigidities  
Forces unleashed by colonial administration  
Social reform movements  
National movement  
Gandhi's campaign against untouchability  
Stirrings among lower castes due to better education and employment  
Free India's Constitution

#### REFORM MOVEMENTS: AMONG HINDUS    Bengal    Raja Ram-mohan Roy and Brahmo Samaj

Debendranath Tagore and    Tattvabodhini Sabha  
Keshub Chandra Sen and Brahmo Samaj of India Prarthana Samaj  
Derozio and Young Bengal Movement    Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar    Western India    Bal Shastri Jambekar    Students' Literary and Scientific Societies  
Pararnhansa Mandalis  
Jyotiba Phule and Satyashodhak Samaj    Gopalhari Deshmukh Lokahitawadi'  
Gopal Ganesh Agarkar    Servants of India Society    Southern India    Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Movement    Vokkaliga Sangha    Justice Movement  
Self-respect Movement    Temple Entry Movement    All India  
Ramakrishna Movement and Vivekananda  
Dayanand Saraswati and Arya Samaj  
Theosophical Movement

#### 58 A Brief History of Modern India

##### Summary

##### • AMONG MUSLIMS

Wahabi/Walliullah Movement    Ahmadiya Movement    Syed Ahmed Khan and Aligarh Movement    Deoband Movement

##### AMONG PARSIS

Rahnumai Mazdayasnan Sabha

##### AMONG SIKHS

Singh Sabha Movement    Akali Movement

##### POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Liberation of individual from conformity out of fear psychosis.    Worship made a more personal affair    Cultural roots to the middle classes—thus mitigating the sense of humiliation; much needed self-respect gained  
Fostered secular outlook    Encouraged social climate for modernisation  
Ended India's cultural, intellectual isolation from rest of the world  
Evolution of national consciousness

##### NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS

Narrow social base    Indirectly encouraged mysticism    Overemphasis on religious, philosophical aspects of culture while underemphasising secular and moral aspects    Hindus confined their praise to ancient Indian history and Muslims to medieval history—created a notion of two separate peoples and increased communal consciousness    Historical process of evolution of composite culture arrested to some extent.

## CHAPTER 3

### The Struggle Begins

#### MODERATE PHASE AND EARLY CONGRESS (1858-1905)

The rise and growth of Indian nationalism has been traditionally explained in terms of Indian response to the stimulus generated by the British Raj through creation of new institutions, new opportunities, resources, etc. In other nationalism grew outly. was a result of colonial policies reaction. In fact, it would be more correct to see Indian nationalism as a product of a mix of various factors.

- (i)            Worldwide upsurge of the concepts of nationalism and right of self-determination initiated by the French Revolution.
- (ii)           Indian Renaissance.
- , (iii) Offshoot of modernisation initiated by the British in India.
- (iv) Strong reaction to British imperialist policies in India.

#### FACTORS IN GROWTH OF MODERN NATIONALISM

Understanding of Contradiction in Indian and Colonial Interests  
People came to realise that colonial rule was the major cause of India's economic backwardness and that the interests of the Indians involved the interests of all sections and classes—peasants, artisans, handicraftsmen, workers, intellectuals, the educated and the capitalists. The nationalist movement arose to take up the challenge of these contradictions inherent in the character and policies of colonial rule.

Political, Administrative and Economic Unification of the Country  
The British rule in the Indian subcontinent extended—from the Himalayas in the north to the Cape Comorinirt the south and from Assam in the east to Khyber Pass in the west. The British created a larger state than that

59

60            A Brief History of Modern India

of the Mauryas or the great Mughals. While Indian provinces were under 'direct' British rule, Indian states were under 'indirect' British rule. The British sword imposed political unity in India. A professional civil

service, a unified judiciary and codified civil and criminal laws throughout the length and breadth of the country imparted a new dimension of political unity to the hitherto cultural unity that had existed in India for centuries. The necessities of administrative convenience, considerations of military defence and the urge for economic penetration and commercial exploitation were the driving forces behind the planned development of modern means of transport and communication such as railways, roads, electricity and telegraph.

From the nationalists' point of view, this process of unification had a two-fold effect:

- (i) Economic fate of the people of different regions got linked together; for instance, failure of crops in one region affected the prices and supply in another region.
- (ii) Modern means of transport and communication brought people, especially the leaders, from different regions together. This was important for exchange of political ideas and for mobilisation and organisation of public opinion on political and economic issues.

**Western Thought and Education** The introduction of a modern system of education afforded opportunities for assimilation of modern western ideas. This, in turn, gave a new direction to Indian political thinking, although the English system of education had been conceived by the rulers in the interest of efficient administration. The liberal and radical thought of European writers like Milton, Shelley, John Stuart Mill, Rousseau, Paine, Spencer and Voltaire helped many Indians imbibe modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist ideas.

The English language helped nationalist leaders from different linguistic regions to communicate with each other. Those among the educated who took up liberal professions (lawyers, doctors, etc.) often visited England for higher

### The Struggle Begins 61

education. There they saw the working of modern political institutions in a free country and compared that system with the Indian situation where even basic rights were denied to the citizens. This ever-expanding English educated class formed the middle class intelligentsia who constituted the nucleus for the newly arising political unrest. It was this section which provided leadership to the Indian political associations.

### Role of Press and Literature

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented growth of Indian owned English and vernacular newspapers, despite numerous restrictions imposed on the press by the colonial rulers from time to time. In 1877, there were about 169 newspapers published in vernacular languages and their circulation reached the neighbourhood of 1,00,000.

The press while criticising official policies, on the one hand, urged the people to unite, on the other. It also helped spread modern ideas of self-government, democracy, civil rights and industrialization. The newspapers, journals, pamphlets and nationalist literature helped in the

exchange of ,political ideas among nationalist leaders from different regions.

### Rediscovery of India's Past

The historical researches by European scholars, such as Max Mueller, Monier Williams, Roth and Sassoon, and by Indian scholars such as R.G. Bhandarkar, R.L. Mitra and later Swami Vivekananda, created an entirely new picture of India's past. This picture was characterized by well-developed political, economic and social institutions, a flourishing trade with the outside world, a rich heritage in arts and culture and numerous cities. The theory put forward by European scholars, that the Indo-Aryans belonged to the same ethnic group from which other nations of Europe had evolved, gave a psychological boost to the educated Indians. The self-respect and confidence so gained helped the nationalists to demolish colonial myths that India had a long history of servility to foreign rulers.

### Progressive Character of Socio-religious Reform Movements

These reform movements sought to remove social evils which divided the Indian society; this had the effect

### 62 A Brief History of Modern India

of bringing different sections together, and proved to be an important factor in the growth of Indian nationalism.

### Rise of Middle Class Intelligentsia

British administrative and economic innovations gave rise to a new urban middle class in towns. According to Percival Spear, "The new middle class was a well-integrated all-India class with varied background but a common, foreground of knowledge, ideas and values. It was a minority of Indian society, but a dynamic minority. It had a sense of unity of purpose and of hope.

This class, prominent because of its education, new position and its close ties with the ruling class, came to the forefront. The leadership to the Indian National Congress in all its stages of growth was provided by this class.

### Impact of Contemporary Movements Worldwide

Rise of a number of nations on the ruins of Spanish and Portuguese empires in South America, and the national liberation movements of Greece and Italy in general and of Ireland in particular deeply influenced the nationalist ranks.

### Reactionary Policies and Racial Arrogance of Rulers

Racial myths of white superiority were sought to be perpetuated by a deliberate policy of discrimination and segregation. Indians felt deeply hurt by this. Lytton's reactionary policies such as reduction of maximum age limit for the I.C.S. examination from 21 years to 19 years (1876), the grand Delhi Durbar of 1877 when the country was in the severe grip of famine, the Vernacular Press Act (1878) and the Arms Act (1878) provoked a storm of opposition in the country. Then came the Ilbert Bill controversy. Ripon's Government had sought to abolish, "judicial disqualification based on race distinctions" and to give the Indian

members of the covenanted civil service the same powers and rights as those enjoyed by their European colleagues. Ripon had to modify the bill, which almost defeated the original purpose, because of stiff opposition from the European community.

It became clear, to the nationalists that justice and fair play could not be expected where interests of the European community were involved. However, the organized agitation

## The Struggle Begins 63

by the Europeans to revoke the. Ilbert Bill also taught the nationalists how to agitate for certain rights and demands.

### POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS BEFORE THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The political associations in the early half of the nineteenth century were dominated by wealthy and aristocratic elements, local or regional in character, and through long petitions to the British Parliament demanded—

- \* administrative reforms,
- \* association of Indians with the administration, and
- \* spread of education.

The political associations of the second half of the nineteenth century came to be increasingly dominated by the educated middle class—the lawyers, journalists, doctors, teachers, etc. and they had a wider perspective and a larger agenda.

### Political Associations in Bengal

The Bangabhasha Prakasika Sabha was formed in 1836 by associates of Raja Rammohan Roy.

The Zamindari Association, more popularly known as the 'Landholders' Society', was founded to safeguard the interests of the landlords. Although limited in its objectives, the Landholders' Society marked the beginning of an organized political activity and use of methods of constitutional agitation for the redressal of grievances.

The Bengal British India Society was founded in 1843 with the object of the collection and dissemination of information relating to the actual condition of the people of British India and to employ such other means, of peaceful and lawful character as may appear calculated to secure the welfare, extend the just rights and advance the interests of all classes of our fellow subjects.

In 1851, both the Landholders' Society and the Bengal British India Society merged into the British Indian Association. It sent a petition to the British Parliament demanding

## 64 A Brief History of Modern India

inclusion of some of its suggestions in the renewed Charter of the Company, such as

- (i) establishment of a separate legislature of a popular Character
- (iii) separation of executive from judicial functions
- (iv) reduction in salaries of higher officers
- (iv) abolition of salt duty, abkari and stamp duties.

These were partially accepted when the **Charter Act of 1853** provided for the addition of **six members to the governor-general's council for legislative purposes**.

**The East India Association was organized by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1866 in London** to discuss the Indian question and influence public men in England to promote Indian welfare. Later, branches of the association were started in prominent Indian cities.

**The Indian League was started in 1875 by Sisir Kumar Ghosh** with the object of "stimulating the sense of nationalism amongst the people" and of encouraging political education.

The Indian Association of Calcutta superseded the Indian League and was founded in **1876 by younger nationalists of Bengal led by Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose**, who were getting discontented with the conservative and pro-landlord policies of the British Indian Association. The Indian Association of Calcutta was the most important of pre-Congress associations and aimed to

- (i) create a strong public opinion on political questions, and**
- (ii) unify Indian people on a common political programme.**

Branches of the association were opened in other towns and cities of Bengal and even outside Bengal. The membership fee was kept low in order to attract the poorer sections to the association.

#### **Political Associations in Bombay**

The **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha** was founded in **1867 by M. Mahadeo Govind Ranade** and others, with the object of serving as a bridge between the government and the people.

The Struggle Begins 65

The **Bombay Presidency Association** was started by **Badraddin Tyabji, Pherozshah Mehta and K.T. Telang** in **1885**.

#### **Political Associations in Madras**

The **Madras Mahajan Sabha** was founded in **1884 by M. Viraraghavachari, B. Subramaniya Aiyer and P. Anandacharlu**.

#### **PRE-CONGRESS CAMPAIGNS**

These associations organized various campaigns before the first-all-India association—the Indian National Congress appeared on the scene. These campaigns were—

- (i) for imposition of import duty on cotton (1875)
- (ii) for Indianisation of government service (1878-79)
- (iii) against Lytton's Afghan adventure
- (iv) against Arms Act (1878)
- (v) against Vernacular Press Act (1878)

- (vi) for right to join volunteer corps
- (vii) against plantation labour and against Inland Emigration Act
- (viii) in support of Ilbert Bill
- (ix) for an All India Fund for Political Agitation
- (x) campaign in Britain to vote for pro-India party
- (ii) against reduction in maximum age for appearing in Indian Civil Service; the Indian Association took up this question and organized an all-India agitation against it, popularly known as the Indian Civil Service agitation.
- (iii)

#### INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS—ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Solid ground had thus been prepared for the establishment of an all-India organisation. The final shape to this idea was given by a retired English civil servant, A.O. Hume, who mobilised leading intellectuals of the time and with their cooperation organized the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December 1885. As a prelude to this, two sessions of the Indian National Conference had been held

#### 66 A Brief History of Modern India

in 1883 and 1885, which had representatives drawn from all major towns of India. Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose were the main architects of the Indian National Conference.

The first session of the Indian National Congress was, attended by 72 delegates and presided over by Vomesh Chandra Bonnerjee. Hereafter, the Congress met every year in December, in a different part of the country each time. Some of the great presidents of the Congress during this early phase were Dadabhai Naoroji (thrice president), 13adruddin Tyabji, Pherozshah Mehta, P. Anandacharlu, Surendranath Banerjee, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Ananda Mohan Bose and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Other prominent leaders included Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sisir Kumar Ghosh, Motilal Ghosh, Madan Mohan Malaviya, G. Subramaniya Aiyar, C. Vijayaraghavachariar, Dinshaw E. Wacha.

In 1890, Kadambiny the first woman graduate of Caktiffa University addressed the Congress session, which symbolised the commitment of the freedom struggle to give the women of India their due status in national life.

Apart from the Indian National Congress, nationalist activity was carried out through provincial conferences and associations, newspapers and literature.

#### Aims and Objectives of the Congress

These were to—

- (i) found a democratic, nationalist movement;
- (ii) politicise and politically educate people;
- (iii) establish the headquarters for a 'movement';
- (iv) promote friendly relations among nationalist political workers from different parts of the country;
- (v) develop and propagate an anti-colonial nationalist ideology;



- (vi) formulate and present popular demands before the Government with a view to unifying the people over a common economic and political programme;
- (vii) develop and consolidate a feeling of national unity among people irrespective of religion, caste or province.
- (viii) carefully promote and nurture Indian nationhood.

#### The Struggle Begins 67

##### Was It a Safety Valve?

There is a theory that Hume formed the Congress with the idea that it would prove to be a 'safety valve' for releasing the growing discontent of the Indians. To this end he convinced Lord Dufferin not to obstruct the formation of the Congress. Modern Indian historians, however, dispute the idea of 'safety valve'. In their opinion the Indian National Congress represented the urge of the politically conscious Indians to set up a national body to express the political and economic demands of the Indians. If the Indians had convened such a body on their own, there would have been unsurmountable opposition from the officials; such an organisation would not have been allowed to form. In the circumstances, as Bipin Chandra observes, the early Congress leaders used Hume as a 'lightning conductor' i.e., as a catalyst to bring together the nationalistic forces even if under the guise of a 'safety valve'.

##### METHODS OF POLITICAL WORK OF THE EARLY MODERATES (1885-1905)

The national leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozshah Mehta, D.E. Wacha, W.C. Bonnerjee, S.N. Banerjee who dominated the Congress policies during this period were staunch believers in 'liberalism' and 'moderate' politics. To distinguish them from the neo-nationalists of the early twentieth century who were referred to as the Extremists.

The moderate political activity involved constitutional agitation within the confines of law and showed a slow but orderly political progress. The Moderates believed that the British basically wanted to be just to the Indians but were not aware of the real conditions. Therefore, if public opinion could be created, in the country and public demands be presented to the Government through resolutions, petitions, meetings, etc., the authorities would concede these demands gradually.

To achieve these ends, they worked on a two-pronged methodology—one, create a consciousness and national spirit and then educate and unite people on common political ends.

#### The Struggle Begins 69

##### 68 A Brief History of Modern India

British Government and British public opinion to introduce reforms in India on the lines laid out by the nationalists. For this purpose, a British committee of the Indian National Congress was established in London in 1899 which had Indira Gandhi as its organ. Dadabhai Naoroji spent a portion of his life and income campaigning for India's case abroad: in 1890, it was decided to hold a session of the Indian National

Congress in London in 1892, but owing to the British elections of 1891 the proposal was postponed and never revived later.

The Moderate leaders believed that political connections with Britain were in India's interest at that stage of history and that the time was not ripe for a direct challenge to the British rule. Therefore, it was considered to be appropriate to try and transform the colonial rule to approximate to a national rule.

### CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERATE NATIONALISTS

#### Economic Critique of British Imperialism

The early nationalists, led by Dadabhai Naoroji, R.C. Dutt, Dinshaw Wacha and others, carefully analysed the political economy of British rule in India, and put forward, the to explain British exploitation of India. They opposed the transformation of a basically self-sufficient Indian economy into a colonial economy (i.e., a supplier of raw materials and foos an importer of finished goods and a field of investment for British capital). Thus, the Moderates were able to create an all-India public opinion that British rule in India was the major cause of India's poverty and economic backwardness.

To mitigate the deprivation characterising Indian life, the early nationalists demanded severance of India's economic subservience to Britain and development of an independent economy through involvement of Indian capital and enterprise. The early nationalists demanded reduction in land revenue, abolition of salt tax, improvement in working conditions of plantation labour, reduction in military expenditure, and encouragement to modern industry through tariff protection and direct government aid. (Also refer to chapter on Economic Impact of British Rule in India.)

#### Constitutional Reforms and Propaganda in Legislature

Legislative councils in India had no real official power till 1920. Yet, work done in them by the nationalists helped the growth of the national movement. The Imperial Legislative Council constituted by the Indian Councils Act (1861) was an impotent body—designed to disguise official measures as having been passed by a > representative body. Indian members were few in number—thirty years from 1862 to 1892 only for brLfiye. Indians were nominated to it most of them being wealthy, landed and, loyalist, interests. Only a handful of political figures and intellectuals such as Ahmed Khan, Kristodas Pal, V.N. Mandlik, K.L. Nulkar and Rashbehari Ghosh were nominated.

From 1885 to 1892, the nationalist demands for constitutional reforms were centred around

1. expansion of councils—i.e., greater participation of Indians in councils,
2. reform of councils—i.e., more powers to councils, especially greater control over finances.

The early nationalists worked with the long-term objective of a democratic self-government. Their demands for constitutional reforms were conceded in 1892 in the form of the Indian Councils Act.

These reforms were severely criticised at Congress sessions, where the nationalists made no secret of their dissatisfaction with them. Now, they demanded (i) a majority of elected Indians, and (ii) control over the budget i.e., the 'power to vote upon and amend the budget. They gave the slogan—"No taxation without representation". Gradually, the scope of constitutional demands was widened and Dadabhai Naoroji (1904), Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1905) and Lokmanya Tilak (1906) demanded self-government like the self-governing colonies of Canada and Australia. Also, leaders like Pherozshah Mehta and Gokhale put government policies and proposals to severe criticism.

The British had intended to use the councils to incorporate the more vocal among Indian leaders, so as to allow them to let off their "political steam", while the impotent councils

## 70 A Brief History of Modern India

### Indian Councils Act 1892.

The main provisions of this Act were as follows.

- Number of additional members in Imperial Legislative Councils and the Provincial Legislative Councils was raised. In Imperial Legislative Council, now the governor-general could have ten to sixteen non-officials (instead of six to ten previously).
- Some of these additional members could be indirectly elected. Thus an element of election was introduced for the first time.
- Budget could be discussed.
- Questions could be asked.

But there were certain limitations of these reforms.

- The officials retained their majority in the council, thus leaving ineffective the non-official voice.
- The 'reformed' Imperial Legislative Council met, during its tenure till 1909, on an average for only thirteen days in a year, and the number of unofficial Indian members present was only five out of twenty-four.
- The budget could not be voted upon, nor could any amendments be made to it.
- Supplementaries could not be asked, nor could answers be discussed.

could afford to remain, deaf to their criticism. But the nationalists were able to transform these councils into forums for ventilating popular grievances, for exposing the defects of an indifferent bureaucracy, for criticising government policies/proposals, raising basic economic issues, especially regarding public finance.

The nationalists were, thus, able to enhance their political stature and build a national movement while undermining the political and moral influence, of imperialist rule. This helped in generating anti-imperialist sentiments among the public. But, at the same time, the nationalists failed to widen the democratic base of the movement by not including the masses, especially women, and not demanding the right to vote for all.

### Campaign for General Administrative Reforms

These included the following:

**Indianisation of government service:** on the economic grounds that British civil servants expected very high emoluments

### The Struggle Begins 71

while inclusion of Indians would be more economical; on political grounds that, since salaries of British bureaucrats were remitted back home and pensions paid in England, this amounted to economic drain; and on moral grounds that Indians were being discriminated against by being kept away from positions of trust and responsibility.

Separation from, executive functions.

**Criticism of bureaucratic and an expensive and time-consuming judicial system.**

Criticism of foreign policy which resulted in **Afghanistan war** and suppression of tribals in the North-West.

**Increase in expenditure on welfare (i.e., health, sanitation), education—especially technical—irrigation works and improvement of agriculture, agricultural banks for cultivators, etc.**

**Better treatment for Indian labour abroad** in other British colonies, who faced oppression and racial discrimination there.

**Defence of Civil Rights** These rights included the right **to speech, thought, association and expression** an **incessant campaign**, the nationalists were able to spread modern democratic ideas, and soon the defence of civil rights became an integral part of the freedom struggle. It was due to the increased consciousness that there was a great public outrage at the **arrest of Tilak** and several other leaders and journalists in **1897** and at the arrest and deportation of the **Natu brothers without a trial**. (Also refer to chapter on Development of Press in India.)

### AN EVALUATION OF THE EARLY NATIONALISTS

- (i) They represented the most progressive forces of the time.
- (ii) They were able to create a wide national awakening of all Indians having common interests and the need to rally around a common programme against a common enemy, and above all, the feeling of belonging to one nation.
- (iii) They trained people in political work and popularised modern ideas.

### 72 A Brief History of Modern India

- (iv) They exposed the basically exploitative character of colonial rule, thus undermining its moral foundations.
- (v) Their political work was based on hard realities, and not on shallow sentiments, religion, etc.
- (vi) They were able to establish the basic political truth that India should be ruled in the interest of Indians.

(vii) They created a solid base for a more vigorous, militant, mass-based national movement in the following years.

(vii) However, they failed to widen their democratic base and the scope of their demands.

#### ROLE OF MASSES

The moderate phase of the national movement had a narrow social base and the masses played a passive role. This was because the early nationalists lacked political faith in the masses; they felt that there were numerous divisions and subdivisions in the Indian society, and the generally ignorant and had conservative ideas and thoughts. These heterogeneous elements had first to be welded into a nation before their entry into the political sphere. But they failed to realise that it was only during the freedom struggle and political participation that these diverse elements were to come together. **Because of the lack of mass participation, the Moderates could not take militant political positions against the authorities.** The later nationalists differed from the Moderates precisely on this point. Still, the early nationalists represented the emerging Indian nation against colonial interests.

#### ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT

**The British Indian Government was hostile to the Congress from the beginning despite the latter's moderate methods and emphasis on loyalty to the British Crown.** The official attitude stiffened further after 1887 when the Government failed to persuade the Congress to confine itself to social questions while the Congress was becoming increasingly critical of the colonial rule. Now, the Government resorted to open

#### The Struggle Begins 73

condemnation of the Congress, calling the nationalists "seditious, brahmins", "disloyal babus", etc., **Dufferin called, the Congress "a factory of sedition"**. Later, the Government adopted a **'divide and rule'** policy towards the Congress. The officials encouraged reactionary elements and Raja Shiv Prasad Singh of Benaras to organize the United Patriotic Association to counter Congress propaganda. The Government also tried to divide the nationalists on the basis and, through a policy of 'carrot and stick', pitted the Moderates against the Extremists. But the Government failed to check the rising tide of Nationalism.

#### Views

"You don't realise our place in the history of our country. These monuments are nominally 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." Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade to Gokhale (1891)

We cannot blame them for the attitude they adopted as pioneers of Indian political reform any more than we can blame the brick and mortar that is buried six feet deep in the foundation and, plinth of a modern edifice. They have made possible the superstructure, storey by storey, by

colonial selfgovernment, home rule within the empire, swaraj and on the top of all, complete independence. Pattabhi Sitaramayya

The period from 1858 to 1905 was the seed time of Indian nationalism; and the early nationalists sowed the seeds well and deep. Bipin Chandra

It was at best an opportunist movement. It opened opportunities for treacheries and hypocrisies. It enabled some people to trade in the name of patriotism. Lala Lajpat Rai

The Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful fall

#### 74 A. Brief History of Modern India

##### Summary

##### FACTORS IN GROWTH OF MODERN "NATIONALISM"

Understanding of contradictions in Indian and colonial interests  
Political, administrative and economic unification of the country.  
Western thought and education  
Role of press and literature  
Rediscovery of India's past-historical researches  
Rise of middle class intelligentsia  
Impact of contemporary movements worldwide  
Reactionary policies and racial arrogance of rulers

##### POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS BEFORE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

1836-Bangabhasha Prakasika Sabha  
Zamindari Association or Landholders' Society  
1843-Bengal British India Society  
1851-British Indian Association  
1866-East India Association  
1875-Indian League  
1876-Indian Association of Calcutta  
1867-Poona Sarvajanik Sabha  
1885-Bombay Presidency Association  
1884-Madras Mahajan Sabha

##### EARLY NATIONALIST METHODOLOGY

Constitutional agitation within four walls of law

Create public opinion in India and campaign for support to Indian demands in England  
Political education of people  
Political connections with Britain in India's interests at that stage  
Time not ripe for direct challenge to colonial rule

##### CONTRIBUTIONS OF MODERATE NATIONALISTS

Economic critique of British imperialism  
Constitutional reforms and propaganda in legislature  
Campaign for general administrative reforms  
Defence of civil rights.

## CHAPTER 4

### National Movement-1905-1918

#### WHY MILITANT NATIONALISM GREW?

A radical trend of a militant nationalist approach to political activity started emerging in the 1890s and it took a concrete shape by 1905. As an adjunct to this trend, a revolutionary terrorist wing also took shape. But why did this militant trend emerge?

1. **Recognition of the True Nature of British Rule:** Having seen that, the Government was not conceding any of their important demands, the more militant among those politically conscious got disillusioned and started looking for a more effective mode of political action. Also, the feeling that only an Indian Government could bring India on a path of progress started attracting more and more people. The economic miseries of the 1890s further exposed the exploitative character of colonial rule. Severe famines killed 90 lakh persons between 1896 and 1900. Bubonic plague affected large areas of the Deccan. There were large-scale riots in the Deccan. The nationalists were wide awake to the fact that instead of giving more rights to the Indians, the Government was taking away even the existing ones.

1892 The Indian Councils Act was criticised by nationalists as it failed to satisfy them. 1897 – The Nattu brothers were deported without trial and Tilak and others, imprisoned on charges of sedition. 1898 – Repressive laws under IPC Section 124 A were further amplified with new provisions under IPC Section 156 A. 1899 – Number of Indian members in Calcutta Corporation were reduced.

75

76 A Brief History of Modern India

1904 1904

**Official Secrets Act** curbed freedom of press. **Indian Universities Act** ensured greater government control over universities, which it described as factories producing political revolutionaries. Also, British rule was no longer progressive—socially and culturally. It was suppressing the spread of education, especially mass and technical education.

2. **Growth of Confidence and Self-Respect:** With this grew the faith in self-effort. Tilak, Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal repeatedly urged the nationalists to rely on the character and capacities of the Indian people. A feeling started gaining currency that only the masses were capable of making the immense sacrifices needed to win freedom.
3. **Growth of Education:** While, on the one hand, the spread of education led to an increased awareness among the masses, on the other hand, the rise in unemployment and underemployment among the educated drew attention to poverty and the underdeveloped state of

the country's economy under colonial rule. This added to the already simmering discontent among the more radical nationalists.

4. **International Influences:** Remarkable progress made by Japan after 1868 and its emergence as an industrial power opened the eyes of Indians to the fact that economic progress was possible even by an Asian country without any external help. The defeat of the Italian army by Ethiopians (1896), the Boer wars (1899-1902) where the British faced reverses and Japan's victory over Russia (1905) demolished myths of European invincibility. Also, the nationalists were inspired by the nationalist movements worldwide—in Ireland, Russia, Egypt, Turkey, Persia and China. The Indians realised that a united people willing to make sacrifices could take on the mightiest of empires.

5. **Reaction to Increasing Westernisation:** The new leadership felt the stranglehold of excessive westernisation and sensed colonial designs to submerge the Indian national

National Movement-1905-1918 77

Ifherkness

Views

If there is a sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness. Weakness is sin, weakness' is death. Swami Vivekananda  
The Extremists of today will be the Moderates of tomorrow, just as the Moderates of today were the Extremists of yesterday. B.G. Tilak  
What one Asiatic has done, others can. If Japan can drub Russia, India can drub England with equal ease... let us drive the British into the sea and take our place side by side with Japan among the great powers of the world. Karachi Chronicle (June 18, 1905)

identity in the British Empire

The intellectual and moral inspiration of the new leadership was Indian. Intellectuals like Swami Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Swami Dayanand Saraswati inspired many young nationalists with their forceful and articulate arguments, painting India's past in brighter colours than the British ideologues had. These thinkers exploded the myth of western superiority by referring to the richness of Indian civilisation in the past Dayanand's 'India for the Indians'.

6. **Dissatisfaction with Achievements of Moderates:** The younger elements within the Congress were dissatisfied with the achievements of the Moderates first 15-20 years. They were strongly critical of the methods of peaceful and constitutional agitation, popularly known as the "Three P's"—prayer, petition and protest—and described these methods as 'political mendicancy'.

7. **Reactionary Policies of Curzon:** A sharp reaction was created in the Indian mind by Curzon's seven-year rule in India which was full of



missions, commissions and orrussions. He refused to recognise India as a to Indian nationalists and the intelligentsia by describing their activities as "ie-tfin:oflofgrs". He spoke derogatorily of Indian

## 78 A Brief History of Modern India

character in general. Administrative measures adopted during his rule—the Official Secrets Act, the Indian Universities Act, the calcration Act and,, above all, the partition of Bengal—left no doubts . in Indian minds about the basically reactionary nature of British rule in India.

Existence of a Militant School, of Thought By the dawn of the twentieth century, a band of nationalist thinkers had emerged who advocated a more militant approach to political work. These included Raj Narain Bose, Ashwini Kumar Datta, Aurobindo Ghosh and Bengal; Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar and Tilak. in Maharashtra; and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab. as the most outstanding representative of this school of thought. The bask' tenets of this school of thought were: hatred for foreign rule; since no hope could be derived from it, Indians should work out their own salvation;

- swaraj to be the goal of national movement; direct political action required;
- belief in capacity Of the masses to challenge the authority;
- personal sacrifices required and a true nationalist to be always ready for it.

## 9. A Trained Leadership Had Emerged

This leadership could provide a proper diannelisation of the immense potential for political struggle which the masses possessed and, as the militant nationalists thought, were ready to give expression to. This energy of the masses got a release during the movement against the partition of Bengal, which acquired the form of the swadeshi agitation.

## THE SWADESHI AND BOYCOTT MOVEMENT

The Swadeshi Movement had its genesis, in the anti-partition movement which was started to oppose the British decision to partition Bengal.

The Government's decision to partition Bengal had been made public in December 1903. The official reason. given for the decision was that Bengal with a population of 78 million

## National Movement-1905-1918 79

(about a quarter of the population of British India) had become too big to be administered. This was true to some extent, but the real motive behind the partition plan was the British desire to weaken Bengal, the nerve centre of Indian nationalism. This it sought to achieve by putting the Bengalis under two administrations by dividing them (i) on the basis of language (thus reducing the Bengalis to a minority in Bengal itself as in the new proposal Bengal proper was to have 17 million Bengalis and 37 million Hindi and Oriya speakers), and (ii) on the basis of religion, as the western half was to be a Hindu majority area (42 million out of a total 54 million) and the eastern half was to be a Muslim majority area (18 million out of a total of 31 million). Trying

to woo the Muslims, **Curzon**, the viceroy at that time, argued that Dacca could become the capital of the new Muslim majority province, which would provide them with a unity not experienced by them since the days of old Muslim viceroys and kings. Thus, it was clear that the Government was up to its old policy of propping up Muslim communalists to counter the Congress and the national movement.

#### Anti-Partition Campaign Under Moderates (1903-05)

During this period, the leadership was provided by men like **Surendranath Banerjee, K.K. Mitra and Prithwishchandra Ray**. The methods adopted were petitions to the Government, public meetings, memoranda, and propaganda through pamphlets and **newspapers such as Hitabadi, Sanjibani and Bengalee**. Their objective was to exert sufficient pressure on the Government through an educated public opinion in India and England to prevent the unjust partition of Bengal from being implemented.

The Announcement Ignoring a loud public opinion against the partition proposal, the Government announced partition of Bengal in **July 1905**. Within days, protest meetings were held in small towns all over Bengal. It was in these meetings that the pledge to boycott foreign goods was first taken. On **August 1905**, with the passage of Boycott Resolution in a massive meeting held in the Calcutta Town hall,

#### 80 A Brief History of Modern India

##### National Movement-1905-1918 81

the formal proclamation of Swadeshi Movement was made. After this, the leaders dispersed to other parts of Bengal to propagate the message of boycott of Manchester cloth and Liverpool salt.

**October 16, 1905**, the day the partition formally **came into force**, was observed as a day of mourning through out Bengal. People fasted, bathed in the Ganga and walked barefoot in processions singing Bande Mataram (which almost spontaneously became the theme song of the movement). **People tied rakhis on each other's hands as a symbol of unity of the two halves of Bengal**. Later in the day, Surendranath Banerjee and Ananda Mohan Bose addressed huge gatherings (perhaps the largest till then under the nationalist banner). Within a few hours of the meeting, Rs 50,000 were raised for the movement.

Soon, the movement spread to other parts of the country—in Poona and Bombay under Tilak, in Punjab under Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, in Delhi under Syed Haider Raza, and Madras under Chidambaram Pillai.

#### The Congress's Position

The Indian National Congress, meeting in 1905 under the presidentship of Gokhale, resolved to **(i) condemn the partition of Bengal and the reactionary policies of Curzon, and (ii) support the anti-partition and Swadeshi Movement of Bengal**.

The militant nationalists led by Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh wanted the movement to be taken outside Bengal to other parts of the country and go beyond a boycott of foreign goods to

become a full-fledged political mass struggle with the goal of attaining swaraj. But the Moderates, dominating the Congress at that time, were not willing to go that far. However, a big step forward was taken at the Congress session held at Calcutta (1906) under the presidency of Dadabhai Naoroji, where it was declared that the goal of the Indian Tessa was 'selfgovernment or swaraj like the United Kingdom or the colonies. The Moderate-Extremist dispute over the pace of the movement and techniques of struggle reached a deadlock at the Surat session of the Indian National Congress (1907) where the party split with serious consequences for the Swadeshi Movement.

#### THE MOVEMENT UNDER MILITANT LEADERSHIP

After 1905, the Extremists acquired a dominant influence over the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. There were three reasons for this:

1. The Moderate-led movement had failed to yield results.
2. The divisive tactics of the Governments of both the Bengals had embittered the nationalists.
3. The Government had resorted to suppressive measures, which included atrocities on students—many of whom were given corporal punishment; ban on public singing of Bande Mataram; restriction on public meetings; prosecution and long imprisonment of swadeshi workers; clashes between the police and the people in many towns; arrests and deportation of leaders; and suppression of freedom of the press.

The Extremist Programme Emboldened by Dadabhai Naoroji's declaration at the Calcutta session (1906) that selfgovernment or swaraj was to be the goal of the Congress, the Extremists gave a call for passive resistance in addition to swadeshi and boycott which would include a boycott of government schools and colleges, government service, courts, legislative councils, municipalities, government titles, etc. so as to, as Aurobindo put it, "make the administration under present conditions impossible by an organized refusal to do anything—which will help either the British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of

The militant nationalists tried to transform the antipartition and Swadeshi Movement into a mass struggle and gave the slogan of India's independence from foreign rule. "Political freedom is the lifebreath of a nation," declared Aurobindo. Thus, the Extremists gave the idea of India's independence the central place in India's politics. The goal of independence was to be achieved through self-sacrifice.

#### 82 A Brief History of Modern India

##### New Forms of Struggle

The militant nationalists put forward several fresh ideas at the theoretical, propaganda and programme levels. Among the several forms of struggle thrown up by the movement were **Boycott of foreign goods**: This included boycott and public burning of foreign cloth, boycott of foreign made salt or sugar, refusal by priests to solemnise marriages involving exchange of foreign goods, refusal by washermen to wash foreign clothes. This form of protest met with great success at the practical and popular level.

**Public meetings and processions:** These emerged as major methods of mass mobilisation and simultaneously as forms of popular expression. Corps of volunteers or 'samitis: Samitis such as the **Swadesh Bandhab Samiti of Ashwini Kumar Dutta** (in Barisal) emerged as a very popular and powerful method of mass mobilisation. These samitis, generated political consciousness among the masses through magic lantern lectures, swadeshi songs, physical and moral training to their members, social work during famines and epidemics, organisation of schools, training in swadeshi crafts and arbitration courts.

**Imaginative use of traditional popular festivals and, melas:** The idea was to use such occasions as a means of reaching out to the masses and spreading political messages. For instance, **Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji festivals** became a medium of swadeshi propaganda not only in western India, but also in Bengal. In, Bengal also, the traditional folk theatre forms were used for this purpose.

**Emphasis given to self-reliance or 'atma shakti:** This implied re-assertion of national dignity, honour and confidence and social and economic regeneration of the villages. In practical terms, it included social reform di-id campaigns against caste oppression, early marriage, dowry system, consumption of alcohol, etc.

**Programme of swadeshi or national education:** Bengal National College, inspired by Tagore's Shantiniketan was set

National Movement-1905-1918 83

up with Aurobindo Ghosh as its principal. Soon national schools and colleges sprang up in various parts of the country. **On August 15, 1906, the National Council of Education** was set up to organize a system of education—literary, scientific and technical—on national lines and under national control. Education was to be imparted through the medium of vernaculars. A Bengal Institute of Technology was set up for technical education and funds were raised to send students to Japan for advanced learning.

**Swadeshi or indigenous enterprises**

The swadeshi spirit also found expression in the establishment of swadeshi textile mills, soap and match factories, tanneries, banks, insurance companies, shops etc. These enterprises were based more on patriotic zeal than on business acumen.

**Impact in the cultural sphere**

The nationalists of all hues took inspiration from songs written by **Rabindranath Tagore, Rajnikartt Sen, Dwijendralal Ray, Mukunda Das, Syed Abu, Mohammad and others.** Tagore's 'Amar Sonar Bangla' written on this occasion was later to inspire the liberation **struggle of Bangladesh** and was adopted by it as its 'national anthem'.

**In painting, Abanindranath Tagore** broke the domination of Victorian naturalism over Indian art and took inspiration from Mughal, Ajanta and kajput paintings. **Nandlal Bose**, who left a major imprint on Indian art, was the first **recipient of a scholarship offered by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, founded in 1907.**

In science, JagdishChandrlra Bose, Prafullachandra Roy and others pioneered original research which was praised the world over.

#### EXTENT OF MASS PARTICIPATION

Students came out in large numbers to propagate and practise swadeshi, and to take a lead in organising picketing of shops selling foreign goods. Police adopted a repressive attitude towards the students. Schools and colleges whose students participated in the agitation were to be penalised by disaffiliating them or stopping of grants and privileges to them. Students

84 A Brief History of Modern India

who were found guilty of participation were to be disqualified for government jobs or for government scholarships, and disciplinary action—fine, expulsion, arrest, beating, etc —was to be taken against them.

Women, who were traditionally home-centred, especially those of the urban middle classes, took active part in processions and picketing. From now onwards, they were to play a significant role in the national movement.

Some of the Muslims participated—Barrister Abdul Rasul, Liaqat Hussain, Guznavi, Maulana Azad (who joined one of the revolutionary terrorist groups)—but most of the upper and middle class Muslims stayed away or, led by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, supported the partition on the plea that it would give them a Muslim-majority East Bengal.

Thus, the social base of the movement expanded to include certain sections of the zamindars, the students, the women, and the lower middle classes in cities and towns. An attempt was also made to give political expression to economic grievances of the working class by organising strikes in Britishowned concerns such as Eastern Indian Railways. But the movement was not able to garner support of the Muslims, especially the Muslim peasantry, because of a conscious government policy of divide and rule helped by overlap of class and community at places. To further government interests, the All India Muslim League was propped up in 1907 as an anti-Congress front and reactionary elements like Nawab Salimullah of Dacca were encouraged.

#### ALL INDIA ASPECT

Movements in support of Bengal's unity and the swadeshi and boycott agitation were organized in many parts of the country. Tilak, who played a leading role in the spread of the movement outside Bengal, saw in this the ushering in of a new chapter in the history of the national movement. He realised that here was a challenge and an opportunity to organize popular mass struggle against the British rule to unite the country in a bond of common sympathy.

National Movement-1905-1918 85

#### ANNULMENT OF PARTITION

It was decided to annul the partition of Bengal in 1911 mainly to curb the menace of revolutionary terrorism. The annulment came as a rude shock to the Muslim political elite. It was also decided to shift the

capital to Delhi as a sop to the Muslims, as it was associated with Muslim glory, but the Muslims were not pleased. Bihar and Orissa were taken out of Bengal and Assam was made a separate province.

#### WHY DID THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT FIZZLE OUT?

By 1908, the open phase (as different from the underground revolutionary phase) of the movement was almost over. This was due to many reasons-

1. There was severe government repression.
2. The movement failed to create an effective organisation or a party structure. It threw up an entire gamut of techniques that came to be associated with Gandhian politics—noncooperation, passive resistance, filling of British jails, social reform and constructive work—but failed to give these techniques a disciplined focus.
3. The movement was rendered leaderless with most of the leaders either arrested or deported by 1908 and with Aurobindo-Ghosh and Bipin. Chandra Pal retiring from active politics.
4. Internal squabbles among leaders, magnified by the Surat split (1907), did much harm to the movement.
5. The movement aroused the people but did not know how to tap the newly released energy or how to find new forms to give expression to popular resentment.
6. The movement largely remained confined to the upper and middle classes and zamindars, and failed to reach the masses—especially the peasantry.
7. Non-cooperation and passive resistance remained mere ideas.
8. It is difficult to sustain a mass-based movement at a high pitch for too long.

86 A Brief History of Modern India

#### Views

Bengal united is a power. Bengal divided will pull in several different ways. One of our main objects is to split up and thereby to weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule. Risley (home secretary to the Government of India, 1904)

Swaraj or self-government is essential for the exercise of swadharma. Without swaraj there could be no social reform, no industrial progress, no useful education, no fulfilment of national life. That is what we seek, that is why God has sent us to the world to fulfil Him. B.G. Tilak

Swadeshism during the days of its potency coloured the entire texture of our social and domestic life. Surendranath Banerjee.

Swaraj is the fulfilment of the ancient life of India under modern conditions, the return of satyuga of national greatness, the resumption by her of her great role of the teacher and guide, self-liberation of the people for final fulfilment of the Vedantic idea in politics, that is the true swaraj for India. Aurobindo Ghosh

#### ASSESSMENT

Despite its gradual decline into inactivity, the movement was a turning point in modern Indian history.

1. It proved to be a "leap forward" in more ways than one. Hitherto untouched sections—students, women, some sections of urban and rural population—participated. All major trends of the national movement, from conservative moderation to political extremism, from revolutionary terrorism to incipient socialism, from petitions and prayers to passive resistance and non-cooperation, emerged during the Swadeshi Movement.

2.

The richness of the movement was not confined to the political sphere alone, but encompassed art, literature, science and industry also.

2. People were aroused from slumber and now they learned to take bold political positions and participate in new forms of political work.

National Movement-1905-1918 87

3. The swadeshi campaign undermined the hegemony of colonial ideas and institutions.
4. The future struggle was to draw heavily from the experience gained.

Thus, with the coming of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement, it became clear that the **Moderates had outlived**

#### **Differences Between Moderates and Extremists**

##### **Moderates**

1. Social base—zamindars and upper middle classes in towns.
2. Ideological inspiration—western liberal thought and European history.
3. Believed in England's providential mission in India.
4. Believed political connections with Britain to be in India's social, political and cultural interests.
5. Professed loyalty to the British Crown.
6. Believed that the movement should be limited to middle class intelligentsia; masses not yet ready for participation in political work.
7. Demanded constitutional reforms and share for Indians in services.
8. Insisted on the use of constitutional methods only.
9. They were patriots and did not play the role of a comprador class.

##### **Extremists**

1. Social base educated middle classes in towns and lower middle class.
2. Ideological inspiration—Indian history, cultural heritage and Hindu traditional symbols.
3. Rejected 'providential mission theory' as an illusion.
4. Believed that political connections with Britain would perpetuate British exploitation of India.
5. Believed that the British Crown was unworthy of claiming Indian loyalty.
6. Had immense faith in the capacity of masses to participate and to make sacrifices.



7. Demanded swaraj as panacea for Indian ills.
8. Did not hesitate to use extraconstitutional methods like boycott and passive resistance to achieve their objectives.
9. They were patriots who made sacrifices for the sake of the country.

## 88 A Brief History of Modern India

their utility and their politics of petitions and speeches had become obsolete. They had not succeeded in keeping pace with time, and this was highlighted by their failure to get the support of the younger generation for their style of politics. Their failure to work among the masses had meant that their ideas did not take root among the masses. Even the propaganda by the Moderates did not reach the masses. No all-India campaigns of the scale of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement had been organized earlier by the Moderates and, in this campaign, they discovered that they were not its leaders, which was rather natural.

The **Extremist ideology** and its functioning also **lacked consistency**. Its advocates ranged from open members and secret sympathisers to those opposed to any kind of political violence. Its leaders—Aurobindo, Tilak, B.C. Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai—had different perceptions of their goal. For **Tilak**, **swaraj meant some sort of self-government**, while for **Aurobindo**, it meant **complete independence from foreign rule**. But at the politico-ideological level, their emphasis on mass participation and on the need to broaden the social base of the movement was a progressive improvement upon the Moderate politics. They raised patriotism from a level of 'academic pastime' to one of 'service and sacrifice for the country'. But the politically progressive Extremists proved to be social reactionaries. They had revivalist and obscurantist undertones attached to their thoughts. **Tilak's opposition to the Age of Consent Bill** (which would have raised the marriageable age for girls from 10 years to 12 years, though his objection was mainly that such reforms must come from people governing themselves and not under an alien rule), his **organising of Ganapati and Shivaji festivals as national festivals**, his support to **anti-cow killing campaigns**, etc. portrayed him as a Hindu nationalist. Similarly B.C. Pal and Aurobindo spoke of a **Hindu nation and Hindu interests**.

Though the seemingly revivalist and obscurantist tactics of the Extremists were directed against the foreign rulers, they had the effect of promoting a very unhealthy relationship

## National Movement-1905-1918

89

between politics and religion, the bitter harvests of which the Indians had to reap in later years.

### THE SURAT SPLIT

The **Congress split at Surat came in December 1907**, around the time when revolutionary terrorism had gained momentum. The two events were not unconnected.

### Run-up to Surat



In December, 19 at the Benaras session of the Indian National Congress presided over by Gokhale, the Moderate-Extremist differences came to the fore. The Extremists wanted to extend the Boycott and Swadeshi Movement to regions outside Bengal and also to include all forms of associations (such as government service, law courts, legislative councils, etc.) within the boycott programme and thus start a nationwide mass movement. The Extremists wanted a strong resolution supporting their programme at the Benaras session. The Moderates, on the other hand, were not in favour of extending the movement beyond Bengal and were totally opposed to boycott of councils and similar associations. They advocated strictly constitutional methods to protest against the partition of Bengal. As a compromise, a relatively mild resolution condemning the partition of Bengal and the reactionary policies of Curzon and supporting the swadeshi and boycott programme in Bengal was passed. This succeeded in averting a split for the moment.

At the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1906, the Moderate enthusiasm had cooled a bit because of the popularity of the Extremists and the revolutionary terrorists and because of communal riots. Here, the Extremists wanted either Tilak or Lajpat Rai as the president, while the Moderates proposed the name of Dadabhai Naoroji, who was widely respected by all the nationalists. Finally, Dadabhai Naoroji was elected as the president and as a concession to the militants, the goal of the Indian National Congress was defined as swarajya or self-government like the United Kingdom or the colonies'. Also a resolution supporting the programme of swadeshi, boycott and national education

90            A Brief History of Modern India

was passed. The word swaraj was mentioned for the first time, but its connotation was not spelt out, which left the field open for differing interpretations by the Moderates and the Extremists.

The Extremists, emboldened by the proceedings at the Calcutta session, gave a call for wide passive resistance and boycott of schools, colleges, legislative councils, municipalities, law courts, etc. The Moderates, encouraged by the news that council reforms were on the anvil, decided to tone down the Calcutta programme. The two sides seemed to be heading for a showdown. The Extremists thought that the people had been aroused and the battle for freedom had begun. They felt the time had come for the big push to drive the British out and considered the Moderates to be a drag on the movement. They concluded that it was necessary to part company with the Moderates, even if it meant, a split in the Congress. The Moderates thought that it would be dangerous at that stage to associate with the Extremists whose anti-imperialist agitation, it was felt, would be ruthlessly suppressed by the mighty colonial rule. The Moderates saw in the council reforms an opportunity to realise their dream of Indian participation in the administration. Any hasty action by the Congress, the Moderates felt, under Extremist pressure was bound to annoy the Liberals in power in England then. The Moderates were no less willing to part company with the Extremists.

The Moderates did not realise that the council reforms were meant by the Government more to isolate the Extremists than to reward the Moderates.

The Extremists did not realise that the Moderates could act as their outer line of defence in face of state repression. Both sides did not realise that in a vast country like India ruled by a powerful imperialist country, only a broad-based nationalist movement could succeed.

The Extremists wanted the 1907 session to be held in Nagpur (Central Provinces) with Tilak or Lajpat Rai as the president and reiteration of the swadeshi, boycott and national education resolutions. The Moderates wanted the session at Surat in order to exclude Tilak from the presidency,

National Movement-1905-1918 91

since a leader from the host province could not be session president (Surat being in Tilak's home province of Bombay). Instead, they wanted Rashbehari Ghosh as the president and sought to drop the resolutions on swadeshi, boycott and national education. Both sides adopted rigid positions, leaving no room for compromise. The split became inevitable, and the Congress was now dominated by the Moderates who lost no time in reiterating Congress commitment to the goal of selfgovernment within the British Empire and to constitutional methods only to achieve this goal.

The Government launched a massive attack on the Extremists. Between 1907 and 1911, five new laws were enforced to check anti-government activity. These legislations included the Seditious Meetings Act, 1907; Indian Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908; Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908; and the Indian Press Act, 1910. Tilak, the main Extremist leader, was sent to Mandalay (Burma) jail for six years. Aurobindo and B.C. Pal retired from active politics. Lajpat Rai left for abroad. The Extremists were not able to organize an effective alternative party to sustain the movement. The Moderates were left with no popular base or support, especially as the youth rallied behind, the Extremists.

After 1908, the national movement as a whole declined for a time. In 1914, Tilak was released and he picked up the threads of the movement. THE GOVERNMENT STRATEGY The British Government in India had been hostile to the Congress from the beginning. Even after the Moderates, who dominated the Congress from the beginning, began distancing themselves from the militant nationalist trend which had become visible during the last decade of the nineteenth century itself, government hostility did not stop. This was because, in the Government's view, the Moderates still represented an anti-imperialist force consisting of basically patriotic and liberal intellectuals.. With the coming of Swadeshi and Boycott Movement

91

92 A Brief History of Modern India

and the emergence of militant nationalist trend in a big way, the Government modified its strategy towards the nationalists. Now, the policy was to be of 'rallying them' (John Morley- the secretary of state) or the policy of 'carrot and stick'. It may be described as a three-

pronged approach of repression, conciliation, suppression. In the first stage, the Extremists were to be repressed mildly, mainly to frighten the Moderate. In the second stage, the Moderates were to be placated through some concessions, and hints were to be dropped that more reforms would be forthcoming if the distance from the Extremists was maintained. This was aimed at isolating the Extremists. Now, with the Moderates on its side, the Government could suppress the Extremists with its full might. The Moderates could then be ignored.

Unfortunately, neither the Moderates nor the Extremists understood the implications of the strategy. The Surat split suggested that the policy of carrot and stick had brought rich dividends to the Government.

### REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM

Revolutionary terrorism was a by-product of the process of the growth of militant nationalism in India. It acquired a more activist form as a fallout of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movement.

After the decline of the open movement, the younger nationalists who had participated in the movement found it impossible to disappear into the background. They looked for avenues to give expression to their patriotic energies, but were disillusioned by the failure of the leadership, even from the Extremists, to find new forms of struggle to bring into practice the new militant trends. The Extremist leaders, although they called upon the youth to make sacrifices, failed to create an effective organisation or find new forms of political work to tap these revolutionary energies. The youth, finding all avenues of peaceful political protest closed to them under government repression, thought that if nationalist goals of independence were to be met, the British must be expelled physically.

National Movement-1905-1918

93

### The Revolutionary Terrorist Programme

The revolutionary terrorists considered but did not find it practical at that stage the options of creating a violent mass revolution throughout the country or, of trying to subvert the loyalties of the Army. Instead they opted to follow in the footsteps of Russian nationalists or the Irish nationalists. This methodology involved individual heroic actions, such as organising assassinations of unpopular British officials and of traitors and informers among the revolutionaries themselves; conducting swadeshi dacoities to raise funds for revolutionary activities; and (during the First World War) organising military conspiracies with expectation of help from the enemies of Britain.

The idea was to strike terror in the hearts of the rulers, arouse people and remove the fear of authority from their minds. The revolutionaries intended to inspire the people by appealing to their patriotism, especially the idealist youth who would finally drive the British out. The Extremist leaders failed to ideologically counter the revolutionaries by not highlighting the difference between a revolution based on activity of the masses and one based on individual terrorist

activity, thus allowing the individualistic terrorist activities to take root.

#### A Survey of Revolutionary Terrorist Activities

Following is a brief survey of revolutionary terrorist activities in different parts of India and abroad before the First World War.

**Bengal** By the 1870s, Calcutta's student community was honeycombed with secret societies, but these were not active. The first revolutionary groups were organized in 1902 in Midnapore (under Jnanendranath Basu) and in Calcutta (the Anushilan Samiti founded by Promotha Mitter, and including Jatindranath Banerjee, Barindra Kumar Ghosh and others.) But their activities were limited to giving physical and moral training to the members and remained insignificant till 1907-08. In April 1906, an inner circle within Anushilan (Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Bhupendranath Dutta) started the weekly Yugantar and conducted a few abortive 'actions'. By 1905-06, several newspapers had started advocating revolutionary terrorism. For instance, after severe police brutalities on

94 A Brief History of Modern India

participants of the Barisal Conference, the Yugantar wrote "The remedy lies with the people. The 30 crore people inhabiting India must raise their 60 crore hands to stop this curse of oppression. Force must be stopped by force." Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal had organized a secret society covering far-flung areas of Punjab, Delhi and United Provinces while some others like Hernachandra Kanungo went abroad for military and political training. In 1907, an abortive attempt was made on the life of the very unpopular West Bengal Lt. Governor, Fuller, by the Yugantar group. In 1908, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose threw a bomb at a carriage supposed to be carrying a particularly sadistic white judge, Kingsford, in Muzaffarnagar. Two ladies, instead, got killed. Prafulla Chaki shot himself dead while Khudiram Bose was tried and hanged. The whole gang was arrested including the Ghosh brothers, Aurobindo and Barindra, who were tried in the Alipore conspiracy case. During the trial, Narendra Gosain, who had turned approver, was shot dead in jail. In February 1909, the public prosecutor was shot dead in Calcutta and in February 1910, a deputy superintendent of police met the same fate while leaving the Calcutta High Court. In 1908, Barrah dacoity was organized by Dacca Anushilan under Pulin Das. Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal staged a spectacular bomb attack on Viceroy Hardinge while he was making his official entry into the new capital in a procession through Chandni Chowk in Delhi in December 1912.

The newspapers and journals advocating revolutionary terrorism included Sandhya and Yugantar in Bengal, and Kal in Maharashtra. In the end, revolutionary terrorism emerged as the most substantial legacy of swadeshi Bengal which had a spell on educated youth for a generation or more. But, an overemphasis on religion kept the Muslims aloof while it encouraged quixotic heroism. No involvement of masses was envisaged, which, coupled with, the narrow upper caste social base of the movement in Bengal, severely limited the scope of the revolutionary terrorist

activity. Lacking a mass base, it failed to withstand the weight of state repression.

National Movement-1905-1918 95

**Maharashtra**, The first of the revolutionary activities here was the organisation of the Ramosi Peasant Force by Vasudev Balwant Phadke in 1879, which aimed to rid the country of the British by instigating an armed revolt by disrupting communication lines. It hoped to raise funds for its activities through dacoities. It was suppressed prematurely. During the 1890s, Tilak propagated a spirit of militant nationalism, including use of violence through Ganapati and Shivaji festivals and his journals Kesari and Maratta. Two of his disciples—the Chapekar brothers, Damodar and Balkrishna—murdered the Plague Commissioner of Poona, Rand, and one Lt. Ayerst in 1897. Savarkar and his brother organized Mitra Mela, a secret society, in 1899 which merged with Abhinav Bharat (after Mazzinni's 'Young Italy') in 1904. Soon Nasik, Poona and Bombay emerged as centres of bomb manufacture. In 1909, Jackson, the district magistrate of Nasik, was killed.

**Punjab**, The Punjab extremism was fuelled by issues such as frequent famines coupled with rise in land revenue and irrigation tax, practice of 'begar' by zamindars and by the events in Bengal. Among those active here were Lala Lajpat Rai who brought out Punjabee (with its motto of self-help at any cost) and Ajit Singh (Bhagat Singh's uncle) who organized the extremist Anjuman-i-Mohisban-i-Watan in Lahore with its journal, Bharat Mata. Before Ajit Singh's group turned to extremism, it was active in urging non-payment of revenue and water rates among Chenab colonists and Bari Doab peasants. Other leaders included Aga Haidar, Syed Haider Raza, Bhai Parmanand and the radical Urdu poet, Lalchand Falak'.

Extremism in the Punjab died down quickly after the Government struck in May 1907 with a ban on political meetings and the deportation of Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh. After this, Ajit Singh and a few other associates—Sufi Ambaprasad, Lalchand, Bhai Parmanand, Lala Hardayal—developed into full-scale revolutionary terrorists.

96 A Brief History of Modern India

**Abroad**, The need for shelter, the possibility of bringing out revolutionary literature that would be immune from the Press Acts and the quest for arms took Indian revolutionaries abroad. Shyamji Krishnavarma had started in London in 1905 an Indian Home Rule Society—'India House'—as a centre for Indian students, a scholarship scheme to bring radical youth from India, and a journal The Sociologist. Revolutionaries such as Savarkar and Hardayal became the members of India House. Madanlal Dhingra of this circle assassinated the India office bureaucrat Curzon Wyllie in 1909. Soon London became too dangerous for the revolutionaries, particularly after Savarkar had been extradited in 1910 and transported for life in the Nasik conspiracy case. New centres emerged on the continent—Paris and Geneva—from where Madam Bhikaji Cama, a Parsi revolutionary who had developed contacts with French socialists and who brought out Bande Mataram, and Ajit Singh

operated. And after 1909 when Anglo-German relations deteriorated, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya chose Berlin as his base.

#### Views

The ultimate object of the revolutionaries is not terrorism but revolution and the purpose of the revolution is to install a national government. Subhash Chandra Bose

Will you not see the writing that these terrorists are writing with their blood. M.K. Gandhi

Neither rich nor able, a poor son like myself can offer nothing but his blood on the altar of mother's, deliverance. may I be reborn of the same mother and may I redie in the same sacred cause, till my mission is done and she stands free for the good of humanity and to the glory of God. Madanlal Dhingra.

God has not conferred upon the foreigners the grant inscribed on a copper plate of the kingdom of Hindustan. Do not circumscribe your vision a frog in a well; get out of the venal and enter the extremely high atmosphere of the martinaagva usta and consider the actions of great men. Tilak in Kesari (June 15, 1897).

#### National Movement-1905-1918 97

##### MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS-1909

The Morley-Minto Reforms, so named after Morley, the secretary of state, and Minto, the viceroy at that time, were preceded by two important events. In 1906, a group of Muslim elites called led by the Agha Khan, met Lord Minto and demanded separate electorates for the Muslims and representation in excess of their numerical strength in view of 'the value of the contribution' Muslims were making to the defence of the empire'. The same group quickly took over the Muslim League, initially floated by Nawab Salimullah of Dacca along with Nawabs Mohsin-ulMulk and Waqar-ul-Mulk in December 1906. Muslim League intended to preach loyalty to the empire and to keep the Muslim intelligentsia away from the Congress.

##### The Reforms

- The number of elected members in the Imperial Legislative Council and the Provincial Legislative Councils was increased. In the Provincial Councils, non-official majority was introduced, but since some of these non-officials were nominated and not elected, the overall non-elected majority remained.
- In the Imperial Legislative Council, of the total 68 members, 36 were to be the officials and of the 32 non-officials, 5 were to be nominated. Of the 27 elected non-officials, 8 seats were reserved for the Muslims under separate electorates (only Muslims could vote here for the Muslim candidates), while 6 seats were, reserved for the British capitalists, 2 for the landlords and 13 seats came under general electorate. The elected members were to be indirectly elected. The local bodies were to elect an electoral college, which in turn would elect members of provincial legislatures, who in turn would elect members of the central legislature.



▪ Besides separate electorates for the Muslims, representation in excess of the strength of their population was accorded to the Muslims. Also, the income qualification for Muslim voters was kept lower than that for Hindus. Powers of legislatures both at the centre and in provinces were enlarged and the legislatures could now pass

98 A Brief History of Modern India

resolutions (which may not be accepted), ask questions and supplementaries, vote separate items in the budget but the budget as a whole could not be voted upon.

- One Indian was to be appointed to the viceroy's executive council (Satyendra Sinha was the first to be appointed in 1909).

#### Evaluation

The reforms of 1909 afforded no answer and could afford no answer to the Indian political problem. Lord Morley made it clear that colonial self-government (as demanded by the Congress) was not suitable for India, and he was against introduction of, parliamentary or responsible government in India. He said, "If it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it."

The 'constitutional' reforms were, in fact, aimed at dividing the nationalist ranks by confusing the Moderates and at checking the growth of unity among Indians through the obnoxious instrument of separate electorates. The Government aimed at rallying the Moderates and the Muslims against the rising tide of nationalism. The officials and the Muslim leaders often talked of the entire community when they talked of the separate electorates, but in reality it meant the appeasement of a small section of the Muslim elite only.

Besides, the system of election was too indirect and it gave the impression of infiltration of legislators through a number of sieves. And, while parliamentary forms were introduced, no responsibility was conceded, which sometimes led to thoughtless and irresponsible criticism of the Government. Only some members like Gokhale put to constructive use the opportunity to debate in the councils by demanding universal primary education, attacking repressive policies and drawing attention to the plight of indentured labour and Indian workers in South Africa.

The reforms of 1909 gave to the people of the country a shadow rather than substance. The people had demanded self-government but what they were given was 'benevolent despotism'.

National movement 1905-1918

99

#### Views

Reforms may not save the Raj, but if they don't, nothing else will. Lord Morley.

The reforms of 1909 afforded no answer, and could afford no answer to Indian problems. Montford Report.

Political barrier was created round them, isolating them from the rest of India and reversing the unifying and amalgamating process which had

been going on for centuries. The barrier was a small one at first, for the electorates were very limited, but with every extension of franchise it grew and affected the whole structure of political and social life like some canker which corrupted, the entire system. Jawaharlal Nehru.

#### FIRST WORLD WAR AND NATIONALIST RESPONSE

In the First World War (1914-1919), Britain allied with France, Russia, USA, Italy and Japan against Germany Austria Hungary and This period saw the maturing of Indian nationalism. The nationalist response to British participation in the War was three-fold:

- (i) the Moderates supported the empire in the War as a matter of duty;
- (ii) the extremists, including Tilak (who was released in June 1914), supported the war efforts in the mistaken belief that Britain would repay India's loyalty with gratitude in the form of self-government;
- (iii) the revolutionaries decided to utilise the opportunity to wage a war and liberate the country.

The Indian supporters of British war efforts failed to see that the imperialist powers were fighting precisely to safeguard their own colonies and markets.

#### Revolutionary Activity during First World War

The revolutionary activity was carried out through the Ghadr Party in North America, Berrin Committee in Europe and some scattered mutinies by Indian soldiers, such as the one

National Movement-1905-1918 101

100 A Brief History of Modern India

**In Singapore.** In India, for revolutionaries striving for immediate complete independence, the War seemed a heaven-sent opportunity, draining India of troops (the number of white soldiers went down at one point to only 15,000), and raising the possibility of financial and military help from Germany and Turkey—the enemies of Britain.

#### The Ghadr

The Ghadr Party was a revolutionary group organized around a weekly newspaper The Ghadr with its headquarters at San Francisco and branches along the US coast and in the Far East.

These revolutionaries included mainly ex-soldiers and peasants who had migrated from the Punjab to the USA and Canada in search of better employment opportunities. They were based in the US and Canadian cities along the western (Pacific) coast. Pre-Ghadr revolutionary activity had been carried on by Ramdas Puri, G.D. Kumar, Taraknath Das, Sohan Singh shakna and Lala Hardayal who reached TifiWe. Finally in 1913, the Ghadr was established. To carry out revolutionary activities, the earlier activists had set up a 'Swadesh Sevak Home' at Vancouver and 'United India House' in Seattle.

The Ghadr programme was to organize assassinations of officials, publish revolutionary and anti-imperialist literature, work among Indian troops



stationed abroad, procure arms and bring about a simultaneous revolt in all British colonies.

The moving spirits behind the Ghadr Party were Lala Hardayal, Ramchandra, Bhagwan Singh, Kartar Singh Saraba, Bark Bhai Parmanand. The Ghadrites intended to bring about a revolt in India. Their plans were encouraged by two events in 1914—the Maru incident and the outbreak of the First World War.

#### Komagata Maru Incident

The importance of this event lies in the fact that it created an explosive situation in the Punjab. Komagata Maru was the name of a ship which was carrying 370 passengers, mainly Sikh and Punjabi Muslim would-be immigrants, from Singapore to Vancouver. They were turned back by Canadian authorities after two months of privation and uncertainty. It was generally believed that the Canadian authorities were influenced by the British Government. The ship finally anchored at Calcutta in September 1914. The inmates refused to board the Punjab-bound train. In the ensuing with the police at Budge Budge near Calcutta, 22 persons died.

Inflamed by this and with the outbreak of the War, the Ghadr leaders decided to launch a violent attack on British rule in India. They urged fighters to go to India. Kartar Singh Saraba and Raghubar Dayal Gupta left for India. Bengal revolutionaries were contacted; Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal were asked to lead the movement. Political dacoities were committed to raise funds. The Punjab political dacoities of January-February 1915 had a somewhat new social content. In at least 3 out of the 5 main cases, the raiders targeted the moneylenders and the debt records before decamping with the cash. Thus, an explosive situation was created in Punjab. The Ghadrites fixed early 1915 as the date for an armed revolt in Ferozepur, Lahore. and The plan was foiled at the last moment due to treachery. The authorities took immediate action, aided by the Defence of India Rules, 1915. Rebellion regiments were disbanded, leaders arrested and deported and 45 of them hanged. Rashbehari Bose fled to Japan from where he and Abanindranath Ghose made many efforts to return while Sachin Sanyal was transported for life.

The British met the wartime threat by a formidable battery of repressive measures—the most intensive since 1857—and above all by the Defence of India Act passed, in March 1915 primarily to smash the Ghadr movement. There were large scale detentions without trial, special courts giving extremely severe sentences, numerous court-martials of army men. Apart from the Bengal terrorists and the Punjab Ghadrites, radical pan-Islamists—Ali brothers, Maulana Azad, Hasrat Mohani—were interned for years.

#### Evaluation of Ghadr

The achievement of the Ghadr movement lay in the realm of ideology. It enmeshed militant nationalism with a completely secular approach. But

and militarily, it failed, to achieve much because it **lacked an organized and sustained leadership**, underestimated the extent of preparation required at every level—organisational, ideological, financial and tactical strategic—and perhaps **Lala Hardayal was unsuited for the job of an organiser.**

#### **Revolutionaries in Europe**

The **Berlin Committee** for Indian Independence was **established in 1915** by **byadhyay, Bhupendranath Dutta, Lala Hardayal** and foreign office under Zimmerman Plan'. These revolutionaries the Indian settlers abroad to send volunteers and arms to India to incite rebellion among Indian troops there and to even organize an armed invasion of British India to liberate the country.

The **Indian revolutionaries in Europe sent missions to Baghdad, Persia, Turkey and Kabul** to work among Indian troops and the Indian prisoners of war (POWs) and to incite anti-British feelings among the people of these countries. **One mission under Raja Mahendra Pratap Sitarkatullah and Obaidullah Sindhi went** to Kabul to organize a provisional Indian government there with the help of crown prince.

#### **Mutiny in Singapore**

Among the scattered mutinies during this period, the most notable was in **Singapore on February 15, 1915** by **Punjabi Muslim 5th Light Infantry and the 36th Sikh battalion under Jamadar Chisti Khan, Jamadar Abdul Gani and Subedar Daud Khan.** It was crushed after a fierce battle in which many were killed. Later, 37 persons were executed and 41 transported for life.

#### **Revolutionary Activity in India during War**

The revolutionary activity in India in this period was concentrated in Punjab and Bengal, The Bengal plans were part of a far-flung conspiracy organized by Rashbehari Bose and Sachin Sanyal in cooperation with returned Ghadrites in Punjab. **In August 1914, the Bengal revolutionaries reaped a rich haul of 50 Mauser pistols and 46,000 rounds of ammunition from the Rodda firm in Calcutta through a sympathetic employee.** Most

National Movement-1905-1918 103

Bengal groups were organized under **Jatin Mukherji** (or Bagha Jatin) and planned disruption of railway lines, seizure of Fort William and landing of German arms. These plans were ruined due to poor coordination, and **Bagha Jatin died a hero's death near Balasore on the Orissa coast in September 1915.**

There was a temporary respite in revolutionary activity after the War because the release of prisoners held under the Defence of India Rules cooled down passions a bit; there was an atmosphere of conciliation after **Montagu's August 1917 statement and the talk of constitutional reforms;** and the coming of Gandhi on the scene with the programme of nonviolent non-cooperation promised new hope.

### HOME RULE LEAGUE MOVEMENT

The Home Rule Movement was the Indian response to the First World War in a less charged but a more effective way than the response of Indians living abroad which took the form of the romantic Ghadr adventure.

The Indian Home Rule Leagues were organized on the lines of the Irish Home Rule Leagues and they represented the emergence of a new trend of aggressive politics. Annie Besant and Tilak were the pioneers of this new trend.

#### Factors Leading to the Movement

Some of the factors were as follows:

- (i) A section of nationalists felt that popular pressure was required to attain concessions from the Government.
- (ii) The Moderates were disillusioned with the Morley-Minto reforms.
- (iii) People were feeling the burden of wartime miseries caused by high taxation and a rise in prices, and were ready to participate in any aggressive movement of protest.
- (iv) The War, being fought among the major imperialist powers of the day and backed by naked propaganda against each other, exposed the myth of white superiority.
- (v) Tilak was ready to assume leadership after his release in June 1914, and had made conciliatory gestures to reassure the Government of his loyalty and to the Moderates that he wanted, like the Irish Home Rulers, a reform of the

### 104 A Brief History of Modern India

#### National Movement-1905-1918 105

administration and not an overthrow of the Government. He also said that the acts of violence had only served to retard the pace, of political progress in India. He urged all Indians to assist the British Government in its hour of crisis.

- (vi) Annie Besant, the Irish theosophist based in India since 1896, had decided to enlarge the sphere of, her activities to include the building of a movement for Home Rule on the lines of the Irish Home Rule Leagues.

#### The Leagues

Both Tilak and Besant realised that the sanction of a Moderate-dominated Congress as well as full cooperation of the Extremists was essential for the movement to succeed. Having failed at the 1914 session of the Congress to reach a Moderate-Extremist rapprochement, Tilak and Besant decided to revive political activity on their own.

By early 1915, Annie Besant had launched a campaign to demand self-government for India after the war on the lines of white colonies. She campaigned through her newspapers, New India and Commonweal, and through public meetings and conferences. At the annual session of the Congress in 1915 the efforts of Tilak and Besant met with some success. It was decided that the Extremists be admitted to the Congress. Although Besant

failed to get the Congress to approve her scheme of Home Rule Leagues, the Congress did commit itself to a programme of educative propaganda and to a revival of local-level Congress committees. Not willing to wait for too long, Besant laid the condition that if the Congress did not implement its commitments, she would be free to set up her own League—which she finally had to, as there was no response from the Congress.

Tilak and Annie Besant set up their separate leagues to avoid any friction.

Tilak's League was set up in April 1916 and was restricted to Maharashtra (excluding Bombay city), Karnataka, Central Provinces and Berar. It had six branches and the demands included swarajya, formation of linguistic states and education in the vernacular. Languages.

Besant's League was set up in September 1916 in Madras and covered the rest of India (including Bombay city). It had

200 branches, was loosely organized as compared to Tilak's League and had George Arundale as the organising secretary. Besides Arimdale, the main work was done by B.W. Wadia and C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar.

The Home Rule agitation was later joined by Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhulabhai Desai, Chittaranjan Das, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mohammad Ali jinnah, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Lala Lajpat Rai. Some of these leaders became heads of local branches. Many of the Moderate Congressmen who were disillusioned with Congress inactivity, and some members of Gokhale's Servants of India Society also joined the agitation. However, Anglo-Indians, most of the Muslims and nonbrahmins from South did not join as they felt Home Rule would mean rule of the Hindu majority, mainly the high caste.

#### The Home Rule League Programme

The League campaign aimed to convey to the common man the message of Home Rule as self-government. It carried a much wider appeal than the earlier mobilisations did and also attracted the hitherto 'politically backward' regions of Gujarat and Sindh. The aim was to be achieved by promoting political education and discussion through public meetings, organising libraries and reading rooms containing books on national politics, holding conferences, organising classes for students on politics, propaganda through newspapers, pamphlets, posters, illustrated post-cards, plays, religious songs, etc., collecting funds, organising social work, and participating in local government activities. The Russian Revolution of 1917 proved to be an added advantage for the Home Rule campaign.

#### Government Attitude

The Government came down with severe repression, especially in Madras where the students were prohibited from attending political meetings. A case was instituted against Tilak which was rescinded by the High Court. Tilak was barred from entering the Punjab and Delhi. In June 1917, Annie Besant and her associates, B.P. Wadia and George Arundale, were arrested. This invited nationwide protest. In a dramatic gesture,

Sir S. Subramaniya Aiyar renounced his knighthood while Tilak advocated a programme

#### 106 A Brief History of Modern India

of passive resistance. The repression only served to harden the attitude of the agitators and strengthen their resolve to resist the Government. Montagu, the secretary of state, commented that "Shiva cut his wife into fifty-two pieces only to discover that he had fifty-two wives. This is what happens to the Government of India when it interns Mrs Besant." The Government released Besant in September 1917.

#### Why the Agitation Faded Out by 1919

- (i) There was a lack of effective organisation.
- (ii) Communal riots were witnessed during 1917-18.
- (iii) The Moderates who had joined the Congress after Besant's arrest were pacified by talk of reforms (contained in Montagu's statement of August 1917 which held selfgovernment as the long-term goal of the British rule in India) and Besant's release.
- (iv) Talk of passive resistance by the Extremists kept the Moderates off from activity from September 1918 onwards.
- (v) Montagu-Chelmsford reforms which became known in July 1918 further divided the nationalist ranks.
- (vi) Tilak had to go abroad (September 1918) in connection with a case while Annie Besant vacillated over her response to the reforms and the techniques of passive resistance. With Besant unable to give a positive lead and Tilak away in England, the movement was left leaderless.

#### Positive Gains (i)

The movement shifted the emphasis from the educated elite to the masses and permanently deflected the movement from the course mapped by the Moderates.

(ii) It created an organisational link between the town and the country, which was to prove crucial in later years when the movement entered its mass phase in a true sense.

(iv) It created a generation of ardent nationalists.

(iv) It prepared the masses for politics of the Gandhian style.

(v) The August 1917 declaration of Montagu and the Montford reforms were influenced by the Home Rule agitation.

(vi) Tilak's and Besant's efforts in the Moderate-Extremist

#### National Movement-1905-1918 107

reunion at Lucknow (1916) revived the Congress as an effective instrument of Indian nationalism.

(viii) It lent a new dimension and a sense of urgency to the national movement.

(ix)

#### LUCKNOW SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS-1916

##### Readmission of Extremists to Congress

The Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress, presided over by a Moderate, Ambika Charan Majumdar, finally readmitted the Extremists led by Tilak to the Congress fold. Various factors facilitated this reunion:

- (i) Old controversies had become meaningless now.
- (ii) Both the Moderates and the Extremists realised that the split had led to political inactivity.
- (iii) Annie Besant and Tilak had made vigorous efforts for the reunion. To allay Moderate suspicions, Tilak had declared that he supported a reform of administration and not an overthrow of the Government. He also denounced acts of violence.
- (ii) The death of two Moderates, Gokhale and Pherozshah Mehta, who had led the Moderate opposition to the Extremists, facilitated the reunion.

#### Lucnow Pact between Congress and Muslim League

Another significant development to take place at Lucknow was the coming together of the Muslim League and the Congress and the presentation of common demands by them to the Government. This happened at a time when the Muslim League, now dominated by the younger militant nationalists, was coming closer to the Congress objectives and turning increasingly anti-imperialist. There were many reasons for this shift in the League's position:

- (i) Britain's refusal to help Turkey (ruled by the Khalifa who claimed religio-political leadership of all Muslims) in its wars in the Balkans (1912-13) and with Italy (during 1911) had infuriated the Muslims.
- (ii) Announcement of cancellation partition of Bengal in 1911 had

#### 108 A Brief History of Modern India

annoyed those sections of Muslims who had supported the partition.

- (iii) The refusal of the British Government in India to set up a university at Aligarh with powers to affiliate colleges all over India also alienated some Muslims.

(iv) The younger League members were turning to bolder nationalist politics and were trying to outgrow the limited political outlook of the Aligarh school. The Calcutta session of the Muslim League (1912) had committed the League to "working with other groups for a system of selfgovernment suited to India, provided it did not come in conflict with its basic objective of protection of interests of the Indian Muslims". Thus, the goal of self-government similar to that of the Congress brought both sides closer.

- (v) Younger Muslims were infuriated by the government repression during the War. Maulana Azad's Al Hilal and Mohammad Ali's Comrade faced suppression while the Ali brothers, Maulana Azad and Hasrat Mohani faced internment. This generated anti-imperialist sentiments among the "Young Party".

While the League agreed to present joint constitutional demands with the Congress to the Government, the Congress accepted the Muslim League's position on separate electorates. The joint demands were—

- \* Government should declare that it would confer selfgovernment on Indians at an early date.
- The legislative councils should be further expanded with an elected majority and more powers be given to them.
- Half the members of the viceroy's executive council should be Indians.

View

After nearly ten years of painful separation and wandering through the wilderness of misunderstanding and mazes of unpleasant controversies. Both wings of Indian Nationalist Party have come to realise the fact that united they stand, but divided. A.C. Majumdar (president of the Lucknow session of the INC-1916).

National Movement-1905-1918 109

#### Negative Fallout

While the effort of the Congress and the Muslim League to put up a united front was a far-sighted one, the acceptance of the principle of separate electorates by the Congress implied that the Congress and the League came together as separate political entities. This was a major landmark in the evolution of, the two-nation theory by the Muslim League. Secondly, while the leaders of the two groups came together, efforts to bring together the masses from the two communities were not considered.

#### Positive Gains

Despite being a controversial decision, the acceptance of the principle of separate electorates represented a serious desire to allay minority fears of majority domination. Secondly, there was a large amount of enthusiasm generated among the people by this reunion. Even the Government decided to placate the nationalists by declaring its intention to grant self-government to Indians, as contained in Montagu's August 1917 declaration.

**MONTAGU'S STATEMENT-AUGUST 1917** "The government policy is of an increasing participation of Indians in every branch of administration and gradual development institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government on the part of the

Importance of Montagu's Statement From now onwards, the demand by nationalists for self-government or Home Rule could not be termed as seditious since attainment of self-government for Indians now became a government policy, unlike Morley's statement in 1909 that the reforms were not intended to give self-government to India.

#### Indian Objections

The objections of the Indian leaders to Montagu's statement were two-fold-(i) No specific time frame was given.

- (iii) The Government alone was to decide the nature and the timing of advance towards a responsible government, and the Indians were resentful that the British would decide what was good and what was bad for Indians.

110 A Brief History of Modern India

#### Summary

WHY MILITANT NATIONALISM GREW

1. Realisation that the true nature of British rule was exploitative, and that the Government, instead of conceding more, was taking away even what existed.
2. Growth of self-confidence and self-respect.
3. Impact of growth of education—increase in awareness and unemployment.
4. International influences and events which demolished the myth of white/European supremacy. These included — emergence of Japan—an Asian country—as an industrial power — Abyssinia's (Ethiopia) victory over Italy. — Boer Wars (1899-1902) in which the British faced reverses. — Japan's victory over Russia (1905). — nationalist movements worldwide.
5. Reaction to increasing westernisation.
6. Dissatisfaction with the achievements of Moderates.
7. Reactionary policies of Curzon such as the Calcutta Corporation Act (1899), the Official Secrets Act (1904), the Indian Universities Act (1904) and partition of Bengal (1905).
8. Existence of a militant school of thought.
9. Emergence of a trained leadership.

#### THE EXTREMIST IDEOLOGY

- (i) Hatred for foreign rule
- (ii) Belief in the capacity of masses
- (iii) Swarajya as goal
- (iii) Advocacy of direct political action and self-sacrifice.

THE SWADESHI AND BOYCOTT MOVEMENT Began as a reaction to partition of Bengal which became known in 1903, was formally announced in July 1905 and came into force in October 1905. The motive behind partition was to weaken Bengal which was the nerve centre of Indian nationalist activity; the official reason given for the partition was that Bengal had become too big to administer—which was true but only to some extent. Moderate-led anti-partition movement (1903-05) was under Surendranath Banerjee, K.K. Mitre, Prithwishchandra Ray. Methods included public meetings, petitions, memoranda, propaganda through newspapers and pamphlets.

#### National Movement-1905-1918 111

##### Summary

The movement under Extremists (1905-08) was led by Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh. Methods included boycott of foreign cloth and other goods, public meetings and processions, forming corps of volunteers or samitis, use of traditional popular festivals and metres for propaganda, emphasis on self-reliance or atma shakti, launching programme of swadeshi or national education, swadeshi or indigenous enterprises, initiating new trends in Indian painting, songs, poetry, pioneering research in science and later calling for boycott of schools, colleges, councils, government service, etc.

Extremists took over because of the failure of the Moderates to achieve positive results, divisive tactics of Governments of both Bengals, severe government repression.



Extent of mass participation—students, women, certain sections of zamindari, some lower middle and middle classes in towns and cities participated for the first time while the Muslims generally kept away. Annulment of Partition mainly to curb the 'menace' of revolutionary terrorism.

Why Swadeshi Movement fizzled out by 1908?

Severe government repression.

Lack of effective organisation and a disciplined focus.

With arrest, deportation of all leaders, the movement left leaderless.

Split in nationalist ranks.

Narrow social base.

Achievements "A leap forward" because hitherto untouched sections participated, major trends of later movement emerged; richness of the movement extended to culture, science and literature; people educated in bolder form of politics; colonial hegemony undermined.

MAJOR CAUSE OF MODERATE-EXTREMIST SPLIT AT SURAT (1907)

Moderates wanted to restrict the Boycott Movement to Bengal and to a boycott of foreign cloth and liquor. Extremists wanted to take the movement to all parts of the country and include within its ambit all forr; of association with the Government through a boycott of schools, colleges, law courts, legislative councils, government service, municipalities etc.

112 A Brief History of Modern India

Summary

GOVERNMENT ACTS FOR REPRESSION OF SWADESHI MOVEMENT

Seditious Meetings Act (1907)

Criminal ,Law (Amendment) Act (1908)

Indian Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act (1908)

Explosive Substances Act (1908)

Indian Press Act (1910)

REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM

Reasons for emergence

Younger elements not ready to retreat after the decline of open phase.

Leadership's failure to tap revolutionary energies of the youth.

Government repression left no peaceful avenues open for protest.

Ideology

Assassinate unpopular officials, thus strike terror in hearts of rulers and arouse people to expel the British physically; based on individual heroic actions on lines of Irish nationalists or Russian nihilists and not a mass-based countrywide struggle.

REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY BEFORE FIRST WORLD WAR

Bengal 1902—First revolutionary groups in Midnapore and Calcutta (The Anushilan Samiti)

1906—Yugantar, the revolutionary weekly started By

1905-06—Several newspapers started advocating revolutionary terrorism.

1907-Attempt on life of governor of East Bengal.  
1908-Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose attempt to murder Muzaffarpur Magistrate, Kingsford.

Alipore conspiracy case involving Aurobindo. Ghosh, Barindra Kumar Ghosh and others.

1908-Barrack dacoity by Dacca Anushilan.  
1912-Bomb thrown at Viceroy Hardinge by Rashbehari Boss and Sachin Sanyal  
Sandhya, Yugantar-newspapers advocating revolutionary activity.

#### Maharashtra

1879-Ramosi Peasant Force by Vasudev Balwant Phadke.  
1890s-Tilak's attempts to propagate militancy among the youth through Shivaji and Ganapati festivals, and his journals Kesari and Maharatta.

National Movement-1905-1918 113

#### Summary

1897-Chapekar brothers kill Rand, the plague commissioner of Poona and Lt. Ayerst.  
1899-Mitra Mela-a secret society organized by Savarkar and his brother.  
1904-Mitra Mela merged with Abhinav Bharat.  
1909-District Magistrate of Nasik-Jackson-killed.

#### Punjab

Revolutionary activity by Lala Lajpat Rai, Ajit Singh, Aga Haidar Syed Haidar Raza, Bhai Parmanand, Lalchand 'Falak', Sufi Ambaprasad.

#### Abroad

1905-Shyamji Krishnavarma, set up Indian Home Rule Society and India House and brought out journal The Sociologist in London.  
1909-Madan Lal Dhingra murdered Curzon-Wyllie.  
Madame Bhikaji Cama operated from Paris and Geneva and brought out journal Bande Mataram. Ajit Singh also active.

#### MORLEY-MINTO REFORMS

Number of elected members in Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils increased-elected non-officials still in minority.  
Separate electorates, introduced for Muslims.  
Elected non-officials to be elected indirectly-thus elections introduced for the first time.  
Legislatures could pass resolutions, ask questions and supplementaries, vote separate items of the budget.  
One Indian to be on viceroy's executive council.  
Aimed at dividing the nationalist ranks and at rallying the Moderates and the Muslims to the Government's side.  
No responsibility entrusted to legislators-this resulted in thoughtless criticism sometimes.  
System of election was too indirect.

#### REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY DURING FIRST WORLD WAR

In North America, the Ghadr was organized by Lala Hardayal, Ramchandra, Bhawan Singh, Kartar Singh Saraba, Barkatullah, Bhai Parmanand.  
The Ghadr Programme  
Assassinate officials.  
Publish revolutionary literature.  
Work among Indian troops abroad and raise funds.  
Bring about a simultaneous revolt in all colonies of Britain.

#### 114 A Brief History of Modern India

##### Summary

Attempt to bring about an armed revolt in India on February 21, 1915 amidst favourable conditions created by the outbreak of First World War and the Komagaia Mani incident (September 1914). The plan was foiled due to treachery.  
Defence of India Act, 1915 passed primarily to deal with the Ghadrites.

In Europe Berlin Committee for Indian Independence established by Virendranath Chattopadhyay and others.  
Missions sent to Baghdad, Persia, Turkey, Kabul.  
In India Bagha Jatin organized revolutionary activity in Bengal and died in an encounter (1915) in Balasore.

HOME RULE LEAGUE MOVEMENT Manifestation of a trend of aggressive politics in national movement; was pioneered by Tilak and Annie Besant on lines of a similar movement in Ireland.

##### Factors Favouring the Movement

1. Need being felt for popular pressure to attain concessions.
2. Disillusionment with Morley-Minto Reforms.
3. Wartime miseries—public ready to protest.
4. Tilak, Besant ready to assume leadership.

##### Aim of the Movement

To convey to the common man the concept of Home Rule as self-government.

Tilak's League—Started in April 1916 and operated in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central Provinces and Berar; had six branches.

Besant's League—Started in September 1916 and operated in rest of India; had 200 branches.

Later, the leagues were joined by others including Moderate Congressmen.

##### Methods used

Organising discussions, reading rooms, propaganda through public meetings, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, etc.

Positive Gains Emphasis shifted to the masses permanently; organisational link established between town and country; prepared a generation of ardent nationalists, influenced Moderate-Extremist reunion at Lucknow (1916).

##### LUCKNOW SESSION OF INC-1916

Extremists readmitted to Congress League-Congress put up joint demands under Lucknow Pact. Congress accepted League's position on separate electorates.

## CHAPTER 5

### National Movement-1919-1939

#### Era of Mass Nationalism

Towards the end of the First World War, various forces were at work in India and on the international scene. After the end of the war, there was a resurgence of nationalist activity in India and in many other colonies in Asia and Africa. The Indian struggle against imperialism took a decisive turn towards a broad-based popular struggle with the emergence of Mohandas Karanchand Gandhi on the Indian political scene.

#### WHY NATIONALIST RESURGENCE NOW

##### 1. Post-War Economic Hardships

All Indians were experiencing hardships on various fronts. Industry First, an increase in prices, then a recession coupled with increased foreign investment brought many industries to the brink of closure and loss. They now demanded protection against imports besides government aid.

**Workers and Artisans:** This section of the populace faced unemployment and bore the brunt of high prices. Peasantry Faced with high taxation and poverty, the peasant waited for a lead to protest.

Soldiers Soldiers who returned from battlefields abroad gave an idea of their wide experience to the rural folk.

**Educated Urban Classes:** This section was facing unemployment. These hardships coupled with high expectations of political gains from the Government created a charged atmosphere in the country.

##### 2. Nationalist Disillusionment with Imperialism

Worldwide The Allied powers, to rally the colonies to their side during the war, had promised them an era of democracy

115

116 A Brief History of Modern India

and self-determination after the war. During the war, both sides had launched vicious propaganda to malign each other and expose each other's uncivilised colonial record. But, soon it became clear from the Paris Peace Conference and other peace treaties that the imperialist powers had no intentions of loosening their hold over the colonies; in fact they went on to divide the colonies of the vanquished powers among themselves. All this served to erode further the myth of the cultural and military superiority of the whites. As a result the post-war period saw a resurgence of: militant nationalist activity throughout Asia and Africa, in Turkey, Egypt, Ireland, Iran, Afghanistan, Burma, Malaya, Philippines, Indonesia, Indo-China, China and Korea.

##### 3. Impact of Russian Revolution (November 7, 1917)

The Bolshevik Party of workers overthrew the Czarist regime and founded the first socialist state, the Soviet Union, under the leadership of V.I. Lenin. The Soviet Union unilaterally renounced the Czarist imperialist rights in China and the rest of Asia, gave rights of self-determination to former Czarist colonies in Asia and gave equal status to the Asian nationalities within its borders.

The October Revolution brought home the message that immense power lay with the people and the masses were capable of challenging the mightiest of tyrants provided they were organized, united and determined.

The Government, not prepared to part with or even share its power with the Indians, once again resorted to the policy of 'carrot and stick'. The carrot was represented by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, while measures such as the Rowlatt Act represented the stick.

#### MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REFORMS AND GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1919

In line with the government policy contained in Montagu's statement (August 1917), the Government announced further constitutional reforms in July 1918, known as Montagu-Chelmsford or Montford Reforms. Based on these, the

#### National Movement-1919-1939 117

Government of India Act, 1919 was enacted. The main features of the Montford Reforms were as follows.

- (i) Provincial Government-Introduction of Dyarchy Executive: Dyarchy, i.e., rule of two-executive councillors and popular ministers was introduced. The governor was to be the executive head in the province.
- (ii) Subjects were divided into two lists: "reserved" which included subjects such as law and order, finance, land revenue, irrigation, etc., and "transferred" subjects such as education, health, local government, industry, agriculture, excise, etc. The "reserved" subjects were to be administered by the governor through his executive council of bureaucrats, and the "transferred" subjects were to be administered by ministers nominated from among the elected members of the legislative council.
- (iii) The ministers were to be responsible to the legislature and had to resign if a no-confidence motion was passed against them by the legislature, while the executive councillors were not to be responsible to the legislature.
- (iv) In case of failure of constitutional machinery in the province the governor could take over the administration of "transferred" subjects also.
- (iv) The secretary of state and the governor-general could interfere in respect of "reserved" subjects while in respect of the "transferred" subjects, the scope for their interference was restricted.
- (v)

#### Legislature

- (i) Provincial Legislative Councils were further expanded-70% of the members were to be elected.
- (ii) The system of communal and class electorates was further consolidated.

(iv) Women were also given the right to vote.

(iv) The Legislative Councils could initiate legislation but the governor's assent was required. The governor could veto bills and issue ordinances.

(v) The Legislative Councils could reject the budget but the governor could restore it, if necessary.

(vi) The legislators enjoyed freedom of speech.

118 A Brief History of Modern India

(vii) Central Government—Still Without Responsible Government

#### Executive

(i) The governor-general was to be the chief executive authority.

(ii) There were to be two lists for administration—central and provincial.

(iii) In the viceroy's executive council of 8, three were to be Indians.

(iv) The governor-general retained full control over the "reserved" subjects in the provinces.

(v) The governor-general could restore cuts in grants, certify bills rejected by the Central Legislature and issue ordinances.

#### Legislature

(i) A bicameral arrangement was introduced. The lower house or Central Legislative Assembly would consist of 144 members (41 nominated and 103 elected—52 General, 30 Muslims, 2 Sikhs, 20 Special) and the upper house or Council of State would have 60 members (26 nominated and 34 elected—20 General, 10 Muslims, 3 Europeans and 1 Sikh).

(ii) The Council of State had a tenure of 5 years and had only male members, while the Central Legislative Assembly had a tenure of 3 years.

(iii) The legislators could ask questions and supplementaries, pass adjournment motions and vote a part of the budget, but 75% of the budget was still not votable.

(v) Some Indians found their way into important committees including finance.

(vi)

#### Drawbacks

The reforms had many drawbacks

(i) Franchise was very limited.

(ii) At the centre, the legislature had no control over the governor-general and his executive council.

(ii) Division of subjects was not satisfactory at the centre.

(iv) Allocation of seats for Central Legislature to provinces was based on 'importance' of provinces—for instance, Punjab's military importance, and Bombay's commercial importance.

#### National Movement-1919-1939 119

(v) At the level of provinces, division of subjects and parallel administration of two parts was irrational and hence unworkable.

(vi) The provincial ministers had no control over finances and over the bureaucrats, leading to constant friction between the two. Ministers

were often not consulted on important matters too; in fact, they could be overruled by the governor on any matter that the latter considered special.

On the home government (in Britain), front the Government change; the secretary state was henceforth to be out of the British exchequer.

Views

When the Cabinet used the expression 'ultimate self-government' they probably contemplated an intervening period of 500 years. Lord Curzon. The Government of India Act, 1919 forged fresh fetters for the people. Subhash Chandra Bose.

The Montford Reforms were only a method of further draining India of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude. M.K. Gandhi.

The dyarchy of the double executive was open to almost every theoretical objection that the armoury of political philosophy can supply.

P.E. Roberts.

### Congress' Reaction

The Congress met in a special session in August 1918 at Bombay under Hasan Imam's presidency and declared the reforms to be "disappointing" and "unsatisfactory" and demanded effective self-government instead.

### ROWLATT ACT

While, on the one hand, the Government dangled the carrot of constitutional reforms, on the other hand, it decided to arm itself with extraordinary powers to suppress any discordant voices against the reforms. In March 1919, it passed the

120 A Brief History of Modern India

Rowlatt Act even though every single Indian member of the Central Legislative Council opposed it. This Act authorised the Government to imprison any person without trial and conviction in a court of law, thus enabling the Government to suspend the right of habeas corpus which had been the foundation of civil liberties in Britain.

### EMERGENCE OF GANDHI

#### Early Career and Experiments with Truth in South Africa

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar in the princely state of Kathiawar in Gujarat. His father was a diwan (minister) of the state. Having studied law in England, Gandhi had gone to South Africa in relation with a case involving his client, Dada Abdullah. In South Africa he witnessed the ugly face of white racism and the humiliation and contempt to which Asians who had gone to South Africa as labourers were subjected. He decided to stay in South Africa to organise the Indian workers to enable them to fight for their rights. He stayed there till 1914 after which he returned to India.

Indians in South Africa consisted of three categories—the indentured Inalan labour, mainly from had migrated to South Africa after 1890 to work on sugar plantations; the merchants—mostly Meman Muslims who had followed the labourers; and the ex-indentured labourers who had settled down witeir children in South Africa after the expiry of their contracts. These Indians were mostly illiterate and had little or no

knowledge of English. They accepted racial discrimination as a part of their daily existence. The disabilities these Indian immigrants had to suffer were many. They were denied the right to vote. They could reside only in prescribed locations which were insanitary and congested. In some colonies, Asians and Africans could not stay out of doors after 9 PM nor could they use public footpaths.

#### Moderate Phase of Struggle (1894-1906)

During this phase, Gandhi relied on sending petitions and memorials to National Movement-1919-1939 121

the authorities in South Africa and in Britain, hoping that once the authorities were informed of the plight of Indians, they would take sincere steps to redress their grievances as the Indians were, after all, British subjects. To unite different sections of Indians, Indian Congress and started

#### Phase of Passive Resistance or Satyagraha (1906-1914)

The second phase, which began in 1906, was characterised by the use of the method of passive resistance or civil disobedience, which Gandhi named **satyagraha**.

#### Satyagraha against Registration Certificates (1906)

A new legislation in South Africa made it compulsory for Indians there to carry at all times certificates of registration with their fingerprints. The Indians under Gandhi's leadership decided not to submit to this discriminatory measure. Gandhi formed the Passive Resistance Association to conduct the campaign. The Government jailed Gandhi and others who refused to register themselves. Later, the authorities used deceit to make these defiant Indians register themselves. The Indians under the leadership of Gandhi retaliated by publicly burning their registration certificates.

#### Campaign against Restrictions on Indian Migration

The earlier campaign was widened to include protest against a new legislation imposing restrictions on Indian migration. The Indians defied this law by crossing over from one province to another and by refusing to produce licences. Many of these Indians were jailed.

#### Setting up of Tolstoy Farm

As it became rather difficult to sustain the high pitch of the struggle, Gandhi decided to devote all his attention to the struggle. The Tolstoy Farm was meant to house the families of the satynd to give them a way to sustain themselves.

#### Campaign against Poll Tax and Invalidation of Indian Marriages

A poll tax of three pounds was imposed on all ex-indentured inclusion of demands for the abolition of poll tax (which was too much for the poor ex-indentured Indians who earned less than ten shillings a month) in the



ongoing struggle further widened the base of the campaign. Fuel was added to the fire by a Supreme Court order which invalidated all marriages not conducted according to Christian rites and by the registrar of marriages. By implication, Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages were illegal and children born out of such marriages, illegitimate. The Indians treated this judgement as an insult to the honour of their women and many women were drawn into the movement because of this indignity. The Indians protested by illegally migrating from Natal into Transvaal. The Government held these Indians in jails. Miners and plantation workers went on a lightning strike. In India, Gokhale toured the whole country mobilising public opinion in support of the Indians in South Africa. Even the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, condemned the repression and called for an impartial enquiry. Eventually, through a series of negotiations involving Gandhi, Lord Hardinge, C.F. Andrews and General Smuts, an agreement was reached by which the Government of South Africa conceded the major Indian demands relating to the poll tax, the registration certificates and marriages solemnised according to Indian rites, and promised to treat the issue of Indian immigration in a sympathetic manner.

#### Gandhi's Experience in South Africa

- (i) Gandhi found that the masses had immense capacity to participate in and sacrifice for a cause that moved them.
- (ii) He was able to unite Indians belonging to different religions and classes, and men and women alike under his leadership.
- (iii) He also came to realise that at times the leaders have to take decisions unpopular with their enthusiastic supporters.
- (iii) He was able to evolve his own style of leadership and politics and new techniques of struggle on a limited scale, untrammelled by the opposition of contending political currents.

#### Gandhi's Technique of Satyagraha

Gandhi evolved the technique during his stay in South Africa. It was based on truth and non-violence. Its basic tenets were—

#### National Movement 1919-1939 123

- A satyagrahi was not to submit to what he considered as wrong, but was to always remain truthful, non-violent and fearless.
- He should be ready to accept suffering in his struggle against the evil doer. This suffering was to be a part of his love for truth. Even while carrying out his struggle against the evil doer, a true satyagrahi would love the evil-doer; hatred would be alien to his nature. A true satyagrahi would never bow before the evil, whatever the consequence.
- Only the brave and strong could practise satyagraha, which was not for the weak and cowards. Even violence was preferred to cowardice. Thought was never to be separated from practice.

#### GANDHI IN INDIA

Gandhi returned to India in January 1915. His efforts in South Africa were well known not only among the educated but also among the masses. He decided to tour the country the next one year and see for himself the

condition of the masses. He also decided not to take any position on any political matter for at least one year. As for the political currents prevalent at that time in India, he was convinced about the limitations of moderate politics and was also not in favour of Home Rule agitation which was becoming popular at that time. He thought that it was not the best time to agitate for Home Rule when Britain was in the middle of a war. He was convinced that the only technique capable of meeting the nationalist aims was a **non-violent satyagraha**. He also said that he would join no political organisation unless it too accepted the creed of non-violent satyagraha.

During 1917 and 1918, Gandhi was involved in three struggles—in **Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda**—before he launched the **Rowlatt Satyagraha**.

#### **Champaran Satyagraha (1917)—First Civil Disobedience**

Gandhi was requested by **Rajkumar Shukla** to look into the

124 A Brief History of Modern India

National Movement-1919-1939 125

problems of the **indigo planters**, of Champaran in Bihar. The European planters had been forcing peasants to grow indigo on 3/20 of the total land (called **tinkathia system**). When towards the end of the nineteenth century German synthetic dyes replaced indigo, the European planters demanded **high rents and illegal dues from the peasants** in order to maximise their profits before the peasants could shift to other crops. Besides, the **peasants were forced to sell the produce at prices fixed by the Europeans**.

When Gandhi, joined now by Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul-Haq, Mahadeo Desai, Narhari Parekh, J.B. Kripalani, reached Champaran to probe into the matter, the authorities ordered him to leave the area at once. Gandhi defied the order and preferred to face the punishment. This passive resistance or civil disobedience of an unjust order was a novel method at that time. Finally, the authorities retreated and permitted Gandhi to make an enquiry. Now, the Government appointed a committee to go into the matter and nominated Gandhi as a member. Gandhi was able to convince the authorities that the tinkathia system should be abolished and that the peasants should be compensated for the illegal dues extracted from them. **As a compromise with the planters, he agreed that only 25 per cent of the money taken should be compensated.**

Within a decade, the planters left the area. Gandhi had won the first battle of civil disobedience in India.

#### **Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)—First Hunger Strike**

Gandhi now intervened in a dispute between mill owners of **Ahmedabad and the workers over the issue of discontinuation of the plague bonus**. Gandhi asked the workers to go on a strike and demand a 35 per cent increase in wages. The employers were willing to concede a 20 per cent bonus only. Gandhi advised the workers to remain non-violent while on strike. He undertook a fast unto death to strengthen the workers'

resolve, but the fast also had the effect of putting pressure on mill owners who finally agreed to give the workers a 35 per cent increase in wages.

#### Kheda Satyagraha (1918)–First Non-Cooperation

Because of drought in 1918, the crops failed in Kheda district of Gujarat. Revenue Code,, if the yield was less than one-fourth the normal produce, the farmers were entitled to remission. The authorities refused to grant remission. Gandhi supported the peasants' cause and asked them to withhold revenue. The authorities, not willing to openly concede the peasants' demands, issued secret instructions that only those who could afford to pay should pay. During the Kheda Satyagraha, many young nationalists such as Sardar Patel and Indulal Yaanik became Gandhi's followers.

#### GAINS FROM CHAMPARAN, AHMEDABAD AND KHEDA

- Gandhi demonstrated to the people the efficacy of his technique of satyagraha.
- He found his feet among the masses and came to have a surer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the masses. He acquired respect and commitment of many, especially the youth.

#### SATYAGRAHA AGAINST THE ROWLATT ACT–FIRST MASS STRIKE

Just when the nationalists were expecting post-War constitutional concessions, the Government came out with the repressive Rowlatt Act which the nationalists took as an insult. Gandhi called for a nationwide protest in February 1919. But soon, having seen the constitutional protest fail, Gandhi organised a Satyagraha Sabha and roped in younger members of Home Rule Leagues and the Pan Islamists. The forms of protest finally chosen included observance of a nationwide hartal (strike) accompanied by fasting and prayer, and civil disobedience against specific laws, and courting arrest and imprisonment.

There was a radical change in the situation by now–

- (i) The masses had found a direction; now they could "act" instead of just giving verbal expression to their grievances.

126 A Brief History of Modern India

(ii) From now onwards, peasants, artisans and the urban poor were to play an increasingly important part in the struggle.

- (ii) Orientation of the national movement turned to the masses permanently. Gandhi said that salvation would come when masses were awakened and became active in politics.

Satyagraha was to be launched on April 6 1919 but even before that there were large-scale violent, anti-British demonstrations in Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Ahmedabad, etc. Especially in Punjab, the situation had become very explosive due to wartime repression, forcruitments and ravages of disease, and the Army had to be called in. April 1919 saw the biggest and the most violent anti-British upsurge since 1857.

#### JALLIANWALA BACH MASSACRE (APRIL 13,1919)

On Baisakhi day, a large, crowd of people mostly from neighbouring villages, unaware of the prohibitory orders in the city, had gathered in

this small park to protest against the arrest of their leaders, Saifuddin Kitchlew and Satya al. The Army surrounded the aring unmoor orders from General Dyer and blocked the only exit point and opened fire on the unarmed crowd killing around 1000. The incident was followed by uncivilised brutalities on the inhabitants of Amritsar. The entire nation was stunned. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest. Gandhi by atmosphere of violence and withdrew the movement on April 18, 1919.

#### **KHILAFAT AND NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT**

During 1919-22, the British were opposed through two mass movements—the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation. Though the two movements emerged from separate issues, they adopted a common programme of action—that of non-violent noncooperation. The Khilafat issue was not directly linked to Indian politics but it provided the immediate background to the movement and gave an added advantage of cementing Hindu-Muslim unity against the British'.

National Movement-1919-1939 127

#### **Background**

The background to the two movements was provided by a series of events after the First World War which belied all hopes of the Government's generosity towards the Indian subjects. The year 1919, in particular, saw a strong feeling of discontent among all sections of Indians for various reasons—

1. The economic situation of the country in the post-War years had become alarming with a rise in prices of commodities, decrease in production of Indian industries, increase in burden of taxes and rents etc. Almost all sections of society suffered economic hardship due to the war and this strengthened the anti-British attitude.
2. The Rowlatt Act, the imposition of martial law in Punjab and the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre exposed the brutal and uncivilised face of the foreign rule. The Hunter Commission on the Punjab atrocities proved to be an eyewash. In fact, the House of Lords (of the British Parliament) endorsed General Dyer's action and the British public showed solidarity with General Dyer by helping The Morning Post collect 30,000 pounds for him.
4. ,The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms with their illconceived scheme of dyarchy failed to satisfy the rising demand of the Indians for self-government.

The post-First World War period also saw the preparation of the ground for common political action by Hindus and Muslims—

- (i) the Lucknow Pact (1916) had stimulated Congress-Muslim League cooperation;
- (ii) (ii) the Rowlatt Act agitation brought Hindus and Muslims, and also other sections of the society, together; and
- (iii) (iii) radical nationalist Muslims like Mohammad Ali, Abul Kalam Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hasan Imam had now become more influential than the conservative Aligarh school elements who had dominated the League earlier. The younger elements advocated militant nationalism and active

participation in the nationalist movement. They had strong anti-imperialist sentiments.

In this atmosphere emerged the Khilafat issue around which developed the historic Non-Cooperation Movement.

### 130 A Brief History of Modern India

In February 1920, Gandhi announced that the issues of the Punjab, wrongs and constitutional advance had been overshadowed by the Khilafat question and that he would soon lead a movement of non-cooperation if the terms of the peace treaty failed to satisfy the Indian Muslims.

#### May 1920

The Treaty of Sevres with Turkey, signed in May 1920, completely dismembered Turkey.

#### June 1920

An all-party conference at Allahabad approved a programme of boycott of schools, colleges and law courts, and asked Gandhi to lead it.

#### August 01, 1920

The Khilafat Committee started a campaign of non-cooperation and the movement was formally launched. (Tilak had, incidentally, breathed his last on August 1, 1920.)

#### September 1920

At a special session in Calcutta, the Congress approved a non-cooperation programme till the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were removed and swaraj was established. The programme was to include—

- boycott of government schools and colleges;
  - boycott of law courts and dispensation of justice through panchayats instead;
  - boycott of Legislative Councils; (there were some differences over this as some leaders like C.R. Das were not willing to include a boycott of councils, but bowed to Congress discipline; these leaders boycotted elections held in November 1920 and the majority of the voters too stayed away);
  - boycott of foreign cloth and use of khadi instead; also practice of hand-spinning to be done;
  - renunciation of government honours and titles;
- the second phase could include mass civil disobedience including resignation from government service, and non-payment of taxes.

During the movement, the participants were supposed to work for Hindu-Muslim unity and for removal of untouchability, all the time remaining non-violent.

December 1920 At the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress—  
(i) the programme of non-cooperation was endorsed;

#### National Movement 1919-1939 131

(ii) an important change was made in Congress creed: now, instead of having the attainment of self-government through constitutional means as its goal, the Congress decided to have the attainment of swaraj through

peaceful and legitimate means, thus committing itself to an extraconstitutional mass struggle;

(iii) some important organisational changes were made: a Congress Working Committee (CWC) of 15 members was set up to lead the Congress from now onwards; Provincial Congress Committees on linguistic basis were organised; ward committees were organised; and entry fee was reduced to four annas;

(iv) Gandhi declared that if the non-cooperation programme was implemented completely, swaraj would be ushered in within a year.

(v)

Many groups of revolutionary terrorists, especially those from Bengal, also pledged support to the Congress programme. At this stage, some leaders like Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Annie Besant, G.S. Kharpade and B.C. Pal left the Congress as they believed in a constitutional and lawful struggle while some others like Surendranath Banerjee founded the Indian National Liberal Federation and played a minor role in national politics hence forward.

The adoption by the Congress of the non-cooperation movement initiated, earlier by the Khilafat Committee gave it a new energy, and the years 1921 and 1922 saw an unprecedented popular upsurge.

#### Spread of the Movement

Gandhi accompanied by the Ali brothers undertook a nationwide tour. About 90,000 students left government schools and colleges and joined around 800 national schools and colleges which cropped up during this time. These educational institutions were organised under the leadership of Acharya Narendra Dev, C.R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Zakir Hussain, Subhash Bose (who became the principal of National College at Calcutta) and included Jamia Milli at Aligarh, Kashi Vidyapeeth, Gujarat Vidyapeeth and Bihar Vidyapeeth.

#### 132 A Brief History of Modern India

Many lawyers gave up their practice, some of whom were Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, C.R. Das, C. Rajagopalachari, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Vallabhbhai Patel, Asaf Ali, T. Prakasam and Rajendra Prasad. Heaps of foreign cloth were burnt publicly and their imports fell by half. Picketing of shops selling foreign liquor and of toddy shops was undertaken at many places. Tilak Swaraj Fund was oversubscribed and one crore rupees collected. Congress volunteer corps emerged as the parallel police.

In July 1921, the Ali brothers gave a call to the Muslims to resign from the Army as that was unreligious. The Ali brothers were arrested for this in September. Gandhi echoed their call and asked local Congress committees to pass similar resolutions to that effect.

Now, the Congress gave a call to local Congress bodies to start civil disobedience if it was thought that the people were ready for it. Already, a no-tax movement against union board taxes in Midnapore (Bengal) and in Guntur (Andhra) was going on.

In Assam, strikes in tea plantations, steamer services, Assam-Bengal Railways had been organised. J.M. Sengupta was a prominent leader in these strikes.

In November 1921, the visit of the Prince of Wales to India invited strikes and demonstrations.

The spirit of defiance and unrest gave rise to many local struggles such as Awadh Kisan Movement (UP), Eka Movement (UP), Mappila Revolt (Malabar) and the Sikh agitation for the removal of mahants in Punjab.

Government Response Talks between Gandhi and Reading, the viceroy, broke down in May 1921 as the Government wanted Gandhi to urge the Ali brothers to remove those portions from speeches which suggested violence. Gandhi realised that the Government was trying to drive a wedge between him and the Khilafat leaders and refused to fall into the trap. In December, the Government came down heavily on the protestors. Volunteer rcorps were declared illegal, public meetings were banned, the press was gagged and most of the leaders barring Gandhi were arrested.

National Movement 1919-1939 133

#### The Last Phase of the Movement

Gandhi was now under increasing pressure from the Congress rank and file to start the civil disobedience programme and the Ahmedabad session in 1921 (presided over, incidentally, by C.R. Das while still in jail; Hakim Ajmal Khan was the acting president) appointed Gandhi the sole authority on the issue.

On February 1, 1922 Gandhi threatened to launch civil disobedience from Bardoli (Gujarat) if

- (1) political prisoners were not released, and
- (2) press controls were, not removed.

The movement had hardly begun before it was brought to an abrupt end.

#### Chauri Chaura Incident

A small sleepy village named Chauri-Chaura (Gorakhpur district, UP) has found a place in history books due to an incident of violence on February 5, 1922 which was to prompt Gandhi to withdraw the movement. The police here had beaten up the leader of a group of volunteers campaigning against liquor sales and high food prices, and then opened fire on the crowd which had come to protest before the police station. The agitated crowd torched the police station with policemen inside who had taken shelter there; those who tried to flee were hacked to death and thrown back into the fire. Twenty-two policemen were killed in the violence. Gandhi, not happy with the increasingly violent trend of the movement, immediately announced the withdrawal of the movement.

The CWC met at Bardoli in February 1922 and resolved to stop all activity that led to breaking of law and to get down to constructive work, instead, which was to include Potilarisation of jchail national r temperance, for mitouchabilitv.



Most of the nationalist leaders including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, however, expressed their bewilderment at Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement.

In March 1922 Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to six years in jail. He made the occasion memorable by a

#### 134 A Brief History of Modern India

magnificent court speech: "I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can, be inflicted upon me for what in law is deliberate crime, and what appears to me to be the highest, duty of a citizen."

#### Why Gandhi Withdrew the Movement

Gandhi felt that people had not learnt or fully understood the method of nonviolence. Incidents like Chauri-Chaura could lead to excitement and fervour, turning the movement generally violent. A violent movement could be easily suppressed by the colonial regime who could use the incidents of violence as an excuse to use the armed might of the state against the protestors.

The movement was also showing signs of fatigue. This was natural as it is not possible to sustain any movement at a high pitch for very long. The Government seemed to be in no mood for negotiations.

The central theme of the agitation—the Khilafat question—also dissipated soon. In November 1922, the people of Turkey rose under Mustafa Kamal Pasha and deprived the Sultan of political power. Turkey was made a secular state. Thus, the Khilafat question lost its relevance. A European style of legal system was established in Turkey and extensive rights granted to women. Education was nationalised and modern agriculture and industries developed. In 1924, the caliphate was abolished.

#### Evaluation of Khilafat Non-Cooperation Movement

The movement brought the urban Muslims into, the national movement, but at the same time it communalised the national politics to an extent. Although Muslim sentiments were a manifestation of the spread of a wider anti-imperialist feeling, the national leaders failed to raise the religious political consciousness of the Muslims to a level of secular political consciousness.

With the Non-Cooperation Movement, nationalist sentiments reached every nook and corner of the country and politicised every strata of population—the artisans, peasants, students, urban poor, women, traders etc. It was this politicisation and activation of millions of men and women

#### National Movement 1919-1939 135

which imparted a revolutionary character to the national movement. Colonial rule was based on two myths—one, that such a rule was in the



interest of Indians and two, that it was invincible. The first myth had been exploded by the economic critique by Moderate nationalists. The second myth had been challenged by satyagraha through mass struggle. Now, the masses lost the hitherto all-pervasive fear of the colonial rule and its mighty repressive organs.

#### Views

To sound the order of retreat lost when public enthusiasm was reaching the boiling point was nothing short of a national calamity. The principal lieutenants of the Mahatma, Desbandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Lala Lajpat Rai, who were all in prison, shared the popular resentment. Subhas Chandra Bose.

A mass wave of revolutionary unrest in India in 1919 (evident from the labour unrest and strike wave of 1919-20 and peasant protests in UP and Bihar) worked as a kind of popular ground-swell virtually forcing the leadership to a radical posture. Gandhi and the Congress bigwigs sensed that a revolutionary mass movement was in the offing. They decided to take over the leadership to keep the movement a 'controlled' affair and 'within safe channels'. The movement was called off just when the masses seemed to be taking the initiative. Marxist Interpretation I would suffer every humiliation, every torture, absolute ostracism and death itself to prevent the movement from becoming violent. M.K. Gandhi, in Young India, February 16, 1922.

#### SWARAJISTS AND NO-CHANGERS

##### Genesis of Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party

After Gandhi's arrest (March 1922), there was disintegration, disorganisation and demoralisation among nationalist ranks. A debate started among Congressmen on what to do during the transition period, i.e., the passive phase of the movement.

One section led by C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Ajmal

136 A Brief History of Modern India

National Movement-1919-1939 137

Khan wanted an end to the boycott of legislative councils so that the nationalists could enter them to expose the basic weaknesses of these assemblies and use these councils as an arena of political struggle to arouse popular enthusiasm. They wanted, in other words, to 'end or mend' these councils, i.e., if the Government did not respond to the nationalists' demands, then they would obstruct the working of these councils.

Those advocating entry into legislative councils came to be known as the Swarajists, while the other school of thought led by Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari and M.A. Ansari came to be known as the 'No-changers'. The 'No-changers' opposed council entry, advocated concentration on constructive work, and continuation of boycott and noncooperation, and quiet preparation for resumption of the suspended civil disobedience programme.

The differences over the question of council entry between the two schools of thought resulted in the defeat of the Swarajists' proposal of 'ending or mending' the councils at the Gaya session of the Congress (December 1922). C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru resigned from the presidentship and secretaryship respectively of the Congress and announced the formation of Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party, with C.R. Das as the president and Motilal Nehru as one of the secretaries.

#### Swarajists' Arguments

- The Swarajists argued that entering the councils would not negate the non-cooperation programme; in fact, it would be like carrying on the movement through other means—opening a new front.
- In a time of political vacuum, council work would serve to enthuse the masses and keep up their morale. Entry of nationalists would deter the Government from stuffing the councils with undesirable elements who may be used to provide legitimacy to government measures.
- Their only intention was to use the councils as arena of political struggle; they had no intention to use the councils as organs for gradual transformation of colonial rule.

#### No-Changers' Arguments

The No-Changers argued that parliamentary work would lead to neglect of constructive work, loss of revolutionary zeal and to political corruption. Constructive work would prepare everyone for the next phase of civil disobedience.

But at the same time both sides wanted to avoid a 1907 type split and kept in touch with Gandhi who was in jail. Both sides also realised the significance of putting up a united front to get a mass movement to force the Government to introduce reforms, and both sides accepted the necessity of Gandhi's leadership of a united nationalist front. Keeping these factors in mind, a compromise was reached at a meeting in Delhi in September 1923.

The Swarajists were allowed to contest elections as a group within the Congress. The Swarajists accepted the Congress programme with only one difference—that they would join legislative councils. The elections to the newly constituted Central Legislative Assembly and to provincial assemblies were to be held in November 1923.

The Swarajist Manifesto for Elections Released in October 1923, the manifesto took a strong anti-imperialist line. It said— the guiding motive of the British in governing India is to secure selfish interests of their own country; the so-called reforms are only a blind to further the said interests under the pretence of granting a responsible government, the real objective being to continue exploitation of the unlimited resources of the country by keeping Indians permanently in a subservient position to Britain; the Swarajists would present the nationalist demand of self-government in councils.

- if this demand was rejected, they would adopt a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction within the councils to make governance through councils impossible; councils would thus be wrecked from within by creating deadlocks on every measure.

### Gandhi's Attitude

Gandhi was initially opposed to the Swarajist proposal of council entry. But after his release from prison on health grounds in February 1924, he gradually

### 138 A Brief History of Modern India

moved towards a reconciliation with the Swarajists because

1. he felt public opposition to the programme of council entry would be counter-productive;
2. in the November 1923 elections, the Swarajists had managed to win 42 out of 141 elected seats and a clear majority in the provincial assembly of Central Provinces and, in legislatures, had joined hands with the Liberals and the independents like Jinnah and Malaviya; the courageous and uncompromising manner in which the Swarajists functioned convinced him that they would not become just another limb of colonial administration;
3. there was a government crackdown on revolutionary terrorists and the Swarajists towards the end of 1924; this angered Gandhi and he expressed his solidarity with the Swarajists by surrendering to their wishes.

### Swarajist Activity in Councils

By 1924, the Swarajist position had weakened because of widespread communal riots, split among Swarajists themselves on communal and Responsivist-Non-responsivist lines, and the death of C.R. Das in 1925 weakened it further. The Responsivists among Swarajists—Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya and N.C. Kelkar—advocated cooperation with the Government and holding of office wherever possible to protect the so-called Hindu interests. They accused the Non-responsivists like Motilal Nehru of being anti-Hindu and a beef-eater. Thus, the main leadership of the Swarajya Party reiterated faith in mass civil disobedience and withdrew from legislatures in March 1926, while another section of Swarajists went into the 1926 elections as a party in disarray, and did not fare well. In 1930, the Swarajists finally walked out as a result of the Lahore Congress resolution on purna swaraj and the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34).

### Their Achievements

1. With coalition partners, they outvoted the Government several times, even on matters relating to budgetary grants, and passed adjournment motions.
2. They agitated through powerful speeches on selfgovernment, civil liberties and industrialisation.

### National Movement-1919-1939 139

3. Vithalbhai Patel was elected speaker of Central Legislative Assembly in 1925.
4. A noteworthy achievement was the defeat of the Public Safety Bill in 1928 which was aimed at empowering the Government to deport undesirable and subversive foreigners (because the Government was alarmed by the spread of socialist and communist ideas and believed that a crucial role was being played by the British and other foreign activists being sent by the Comintern).

5. By their activities, they filled the political vacuum at a time when the national movement was recouping its strength.
6. They exposed the hollowness of the Montford scheme.
7. They demonstrated that the councils could be used creatively.

#### Their Drawbacks

1. The Swarajists lacked a policy to coordinate their militancy inside legislatures with the mass struggle outside. They relied totally on newspaper reporting to communicate with the public.
2. An obstructionist strategy had its limitations.
3. They could not carry on with their coalition partners very far because of conflicting ideas, which further limited their effectiveness.
4. They failed to resist the perks and privileges of power and office.
5. They failed to support the peasants' cause in Bengal and lost support among Muslim members who were propeasant.

#### Constructive Work by 'No-Changers

1. Ashrams sprang up where young, men and women worked, among tribals and lower castes (especially in Kheda and Bardoli areas of Gujarat), and popularised charkha and khadi.
2. National schools and colleges were set up where students were trained in a non-colonial ideological framework.
3. Significant work was done for Hindu-Muslim unity, removing untouchability, boycott of foreign cloth and liquor, and for flood relief.

#### 140 A Brief History of Modern India

4. The constructive workers served as the backbone of civil disobedience as active organisers.
- 5.

#### A Critique of Constructive Work

National education benefited the urban lower middle classes and the rich peasants only. Enthusiasm for national education surfaced in the excitement of the movement only. In passivity, the lure of degrees and jobs took the students to official schools and colleges.

Popularisation of khadi was an uphill task since it was costlier than the imported cloth.

While campaigning about the social aspect of untouchability, no emphasis was laid on the economic grievances of the landless and agricultural labourers comprising mostly the untouchables. Although the Swarajists and the No-changers worked in their separate ways, they kept on best of terms with one another and were able to unite whenever the time was ripe for a new political struggle.

#### EMERGENCE OF NEW FORCES DURING THE 1920s

The third decade of the twentieth century is a watershed in modern Indian history in more ways than one. While, on the one hand, this period marked the entry of Indian masses into the national movement, on the other hand, this period saw the basic crystallisation of the main political currents on the national scene. These diverse political

currents owed their origin partly to the coming on the scene of the Gandhian philosophy of satyagraha based on truth and non-violence, as they embodied a positive or negative reaction to it. The international influence on Indian political thinkers during this phase was also more pronounced than before. The new forces to emerge during the 1920s included:

### 1. Spread of Marxism and Socialist Ideas

These ideas inspired many socialist and communist groups to come into existence and resulted in the rise of a left wing, within the Congress, represented by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash

National Movement 1919-1939 141

**Bose.** These young nationalists, inspired by the Soviet Revolution and dissatisfied with Gandhian ideas and political programme, began advocating radical solutions for economic, political and social ills of the country; These younger nationalists—

\* were critical both of Swarajists and No-changers, advocated a more consistent anti-imperialist line in the form of a slogan for **purna swarajya** (complete independence).

\*were influenced by art awareness, though still vague, of international currents, stressed the need to combine nationalism and anti-imperialism with social justice and simultaneously raised the question of internal class oppression by capitalists and landlords.

Among the communist groups, the **Communist Party of India** (CPI) was formed in 1920 in Tashkent (now, the capital of Uzbekistan) by M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherji and others after the second Congress of Comintern. M.N. Roy was also the first to be elected to the leadership of Comintern.

In 1924, many communists—S.A. Datta, Muzaffar Ahmed, Shaukhat Usmani, Nalini Gupta—were jailed in the Kanpur Bolshevik conspiracy case.

In 1925, the Indian Communist Conference at Kanpur formalised the foundation of the CPI.

In 1929, the Government crackdown on communists resulted in the arrest and trial of 31 leading communists, trade unionists and left-wing leaders who were tried at Meerut in the famous Meerut conspiracy case.

Workers' and peasants' parties were organised all over the country and they propagated Marxist and communist ideas. All these communist groups and workers' and peasants' parties remained an integral part of the national movement and worked within the Congress.

### 2. Activism of Indian Youth

All over, students' leagues were being established and students conferences were being held. In 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the All Bengal Students' Conference.

142 A Brief History of Modern India

### 3. Peasants' Agitations In the United Provinces

These agitations were for revision of **tenancy laws, including lower rents, protection against eviction and relief from indebtedness.** Similar peasant agitations took place in the **Rampa region of Andhra, in Rajasthan, in ryotwari areas of Bombay and Madras.** In Gujarat, the **Bardoli Satyagraha** was led by **Patel** (1928).

#### 4. **Growth of Trade Unionism**

The trade union movement was led by **All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)** founded in 1920. **Lala Lajpat Rai** was its first president and **Dewan Chaman Lal** its general secretary. Tilak was also one of the moving spirits. The major strikes during the 1920s included those in Kharagpur Railway Workshops, Tata Iron and Steel Works (Jamshedpur), Bombay Textile Mills (this involved 1,50,000 workers and went on for 5 months), and Buckingham Carnatic Mills. In 1928, there were a number of strikes involving 5 lakh workers. **In 1923, the first May Day was celebrated in India in Madras.**

#### 5. **Caste Movements**

As in earlier periods, the varied contradictions of the Indian society found expression in caste associations and movements. These movements could be divisive, conservative and at times potentially radical, and included:

- Justice Party (Madras) Self-respect movement (1925) under "Periyar"—E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Madras)
- Satyashodhak activists in Satara (Maharashtra)
- Bhaskar Rao Jadhav (Maharashtra)
- Mahars under Ambedkar (Maharashtra)
- Radical Ezhavas under K. Aiyappan and C. Kesavan in Kerala
- Yadavs in Bihar for improvement in social status
- Unionist Party under Fazl-i-Hussain (Punjab).

#### 6. **Revolutionary Terrorism with a Turn towards Socialism**

This line was adopted by those dissatisfied with the nationalist strategy of the political struggle with its emphasis on non-violence. In this also, two strands developed—

National Movement 1919–1939 143

- Hindustan Republican Association (H.R.A.)—in PunjabUP-Bihar
- Yugantar, Anushilan groups and later Chittagong Revolf Group under Surya Sen—in Bengal

#### **REVOLUTIONARY TERRORISM DURING THE 1920s**

##### **Why Attraction for Revolutionary Terrorism after Non-Cooperation Movement**

The revolutionaries had faced severe repression during the First World War. But in early 1920, many were released by the Government under a general amnesty to create a harmonious environment for the Montford Reforms to work. Soon, Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. Under the persuasion of Gandhi and C.R. Das, many terrorist groups either agreed to join the non-cooperation programme or suspended their activities to give the nonviolent Non-Cooperation Movement a chance.

But the sudden withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement left many of them disillusioned; they began to question the basic strategy of nationalist leadership and its emphasis on non-violence and began to look for alternatives. But since these younger nationalists were not attracted to the parliamentary work of the Swarajists or to the patient, undramatic, constructive work of the No-changers, they were drawn to the idea that violent methods alone would free India. Thus, revolutionary terrorism was revived.

Nearly all major leaders of revolutionary terrorist policies had been enthusiastic participants in the Non-Cooperation Movement and included Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Surya Sen, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Chandrasekhar Azad, Shiv Verma, Bhagwaticharan Vohra, Jaidev Kapur and Jatin Das. Two separate strands of revolutionary terrorist groups emerged during this period—one operating in Punjab-UP-Bihar and the other in Bengal.

#### Major Influences

1. Upsurge of working class trade unionism after the War; the revolutionaries wanted to harness the revolutionary potential of the new emergent class for nationalist revolution.

144 A Brief History of Modern India

2. Russian Revolution (1917) and the success of the young Soviet state in consolidating itself.
3. Newly sprouting communist groups with their emphasis on Marxism, socialism and the proletariat.
4. Journals publishing memoirs and articles extolling the self-sacrifice of revolutionaries, such as Atmasakti, Sarathi and Bijou
5. Novels and books such as *Bandi Jiwan* by Sachin Sanyal and *Maher Dabi* by Sharatchandra Chatterjee (a Government ban only enhanced its popularity).

#### In Punjab-UP-Bihar

The revolutionary terrorist activity in this region was dominated by the Hindustan Republican Association/Army or HRA (later renamed Hindustan Socialist Republican Association or HSRA). The HRA was founded in October 1924 in Kanpur by Ramprasad Bismil, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee and Sachin Sanyal, with an aim to organise an armed revolution to overthrow the colonial government and establish in its place a Federal Republic of United States of India whose basic principle would be adult franchise.

#### Kakori Robbery (August 1925)

The most important "action" of the HRA was the Kakori robbery. The men held up the 8-Down train at Kakori, an obscure village near Lucknow, and looted its official railway cash. Government crackdown after the Kakori robbery led to arrests of many, of whom 17 were jailed, four transported for life and four—Bismil, Ashfaqullah, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri—were hanged. Kakori proved to be a setback.

The HSRA Determined to overcome the Kakori setback, the younger revolutionaries, inspired by socialist ideas, set out to reorganise



Hindustan Republic Association at a historic meeting in the ruins of Ferozshah Kotla in Delhi (September 1928). The participants included Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwaticharan Vohra from Punjab and Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Shiv Verma and Jaidev Kapur from UP. The HSRA decided to work under a collective leadership and adopted socialism as its official goal.

National Movement 1919-1939 145

#### Saunders' Murder (Lahore, December 1928)

Just when the HSRA revolutionaries had begun to move away from individual heroic action and terrorism, the, death of Sher-i-Punjab Lala Lajpat Rai due to lathi blows received during a lathi-charge on an anti-Simon Commission procession (October 1928) led them once again to take to individual assassination. Bhagat Singh, Azad and Rajguru shot dead Saunders, the police official responsible for the lathicharge in Lahore. The assassination was justified in these words: "The murder of a leader respected by millions of people at the unworthy hands of an ordinary police officer was an insult to the nation. It was the bounden duty of young men of India to efface it we regret to have had to kill a person but he was part and parcel of that inhuman and unjust order which has to be destroyed."

#### Bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly (April 1929)

The HSRA leadership now decided to let the people know about its changed objectives and the need for a revolution by the masses. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were asked to throw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly on April 8, 1929 against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill aimed at curtailing civil liberties of citizens in general and workers in particular. The bombs had been deliberately made harmless and were aimed at making 'the deaf hear'. The objective was to get arrested and to use the trial court as a forum for propaganda so that people would become familiar with their movement and ideology.

Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were tried in the Lahore conspiracy case. Many other revolutionaries were tried in series of other cases. In jail, these revolutionaries protested against the horrible conditions through a fast, and demanded honourable and decent treatment as, political prisoners. Jatin (4) as became the first martyr on the 64th day of his fast. Defence of these young revolutionaries was organised by Congress leaders. Bhagat Singh became a household name.

Azad was involved in a bid to blow up Viceroy Irwin's train near Delhi in December 1929. During 1930 there were

146 A Brief History of Modern India

a series of terrorist actions in Punjab and UP towns (26 incidents in 1930 in Punjab alone).

Azad was killed in a police encounter in a park in Allahabad in February 1931. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged on March 23, 1931.



In Bengal During the 1920s many revolutionary groups reorganised their underground activities, while many continued working under the Congress, thus getting access to the masses and providing an organisational base to the Congress in towns and villages. Many cooperated with C.R. Das in his Swarajist work. After Das's death (1925), the Bengal Congress broke up into two factions—one led by J.M. Sengupta (Anushilan group joined forces with him) and the other led by Subhash Bose (Yugantar group backed him).

The actions of the reorganised groups included an assassination attempt on the notorious Calcutta Police Commissioner, Charles Tegart. another man named Day got killed) by Gopinath Saha in 1924. The Government, armed with a new ordinance, came down heavily on revolutionaries. Many including Subhash Bose were arrested. Gopinath Saha was hanged.

Because of government repression and factionalism among the revolutionaries, revolutionary activity suffered a setback, but soon many of them started regrouping. Among the new "Revolt Groups", the most active and famous was the Chittagong group under Surya Sen.

Chittagong Armoury Raid (April 1930) Surya Sen had participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and had become a teacher in the national school in Chittagong. He was imprisoned from 1926 to 1928 for revolutionary activity and afterwards continued working in the Congress. He was the secretary of the Chittagong District Congress Committee. He used to say "Humanism is a special virtue of a revolutionary." He was a lover of poetry and an admirer of Tagore and Qazi Nazrul Islam.

Surya Sen decided to organise an armed rebellion along with his associates—Anant Singh, Gariesh Ghosh and Lokenath

National Movement 1919–1939 147

Baul to show that it was possible to challenge the armed might of the mighty British Empire. They had planned to occupy two main armouries in Chittagong to seize and supply arms to the revolutionaries to destroy telephone and telegraph lines and to dislocate the railway link of Chittagong with the rest of Bengal. The raid was conducted in April 1930 and involved 65 activists under the banner of Indian Republican Army—Chittagong Branch. The raid was quite successful; Sen hoisted the national flag, took salute and proclaimed a provisional revolutionary government. Later, they dispersed into neighbouring villages and raided government targets.

Surya Sen was arrested in February 1933 and hanged in January 1934, but the Chittagong raid fired the imagination of the revolutionary-minded youth and recruits poured into the revolutionary terrorist groups in a steady stream.

#### Official Reaction

There was panic at first and then severe government repression. Armed with 20 repressive Acts, the Government let loose the police on the revolutionaries. In Chittagong, several villages were burned and

punitive fines imposed on many others. In 1933, Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested for sedition and given two years' sentence because he had condemned imperialism and praised the heroism of the revolutionaries.

#### Ideological Rethinking

A real breakthrough was made by Bhagat Singh and his comrades in terms of the revolutionary ideology, forms of revolutionary struggle and the goals of revolution. The rethinking had begun in the mid-1920s. The Founding Council of HRA had decided to preach revolutionary and communist principles, and the HRA Manifesto (1925) declared that the "HRA stood for abolition of all systems which made exploitation of man by man possible". HRA's main organ Revolutionary had proposed nationalisation of railways and other means of transport and of heavy industries such as ship building and steel. HRA had also decided to start labour and peasant organisations and work for an organised and armed revolution". During their last days (late 1920s).

#### 148 A Brief History of Modern India

These revolutionaries had started moving away from individual heroic action and terrorism towards mass politics.

Bismil, during his last days, appealed to the youth to give up pistols and revolvers, not to work in revolutionary conspiracies and instead work in an open movement. He urged the youth to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity, unite all political groups under the leadership of the Congress. Bismil affirmed faith in communism and the principle that "every human being has equal rights over the products of nature".

The famous statement of the revolutionary position is contained in the book *The Philosophy of the Bomb* written by Bhagwaticharan Vohra.

Even before his arrest, Bhagat Singh had moved away from belief in terrorism and individual heroic action to Marxism and the belief that a popular broad-based movement alone could lead to a successful revolution. In other words, revolution could only be "by the masses, for the masses". That is why Bhagat Singh helped establish the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1926) as an open wing of revolutionaries to carry out political work among the youth, peasants and workers, and it was to open branches in villages. Bhagat and Sukhdev also organised the Lahore Students' Union for open, legal work among students. Bhagat and his comrades also realised that a revolution meant organisation and development of a mass movement of the exploited and the suppressed sections by the revolutionary intelligentsia. Bhagat used to say, "real revolutionary armies are in villages and factories."

#### What then was the need for individual heroic action?

Firstly, because of the rapidity of change in thinking, effective acquisition of new ideology is a prolonged and historical process. Secondly, these young intellectuals faced the classic dilemma of how to mobilise people and recruit them. Here, they decided to opt for propaganda by deed, i.e., through individual heroic action and by using courts as a forum for revolutionary propaganda.

### Redefining Revolution

Revolution was no longer equated with militancy and violence. Its objective was to be national

National Movement 1919-1939 149

liberation-imperialism was to be overthrown but beyond that a new socialist order was to be achieved, ending "exploitation of man by man". As Bhagat Singh said in the court, "Revolution does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife, nor is there a place in it for personal vendetta. It is not the cult of bomb and pistol. By revolution we mean the present order of things, which is based on manifest injustice, must change".

Bhagat fully accepted Marxism and the class approach to society—"Peasants have to free themselves not only from the foreign yoke, but also from the yoke of landlords and capitalists." He also said, "The struggle in India will continue; so long as a handful of exploiters continue to exploit labour of common people to further their own interests. It matters little whether these exploiters are British capitalists, British and Indian capitalists in alliance, or even purely Indians." He defined socialism scientifically as abolition of capitalism and class domination.

Bhagat was fully and consciously secular—two of the six rules drafted by Bhagat for the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha were that its members would have nothing to do with communal bodies and that they would propagate a general feeling of tolerance among people, considering religion to be a matter of personal belief. Bhagat also saw the importance of freeing people from the mental bondage of religion and superstition—"to be a revolutionary, one required immense moral strength, but one also required criticism and independent thinking".

### Aspects of the New Phase of Terrorist Movement in Bengal

Some noteworthy aspects were as follows.

There was a large-scale participation of young women especially under Surya Sen. These women provided shelter, carried messages and fought with guns in hand. Prominent women revolutionaries in Bengal during this phase included Pritilata Waddedar, who died conducting a raid; Kalpana Dutt who was arrested and tried along with Surya Sen and given a life sentence; Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chandheri, school girls

150 A Brief History of Modern India

of Comilla, who shot dead the district magistrate. (December 1931); and Bina Das who fired point blank at the Governor while receiving her degree at the convocation (February 1932).

- There was an emphasis on group action aimed at organs of the colonial state, instead of individual action. The objective was to set an example before the youth and to demoralise the bureaucracy.

Some of the earlier Hindu religiosity was shed, and there were no more rituals like oath-taking, and this facilitated participation by Muslims.

Surya Sen had Muslims such as Satar, Mir Ahmed, Fakir Ahmed Mian and Tunu Mian in his group.

#### Some Drawbacks

The movement retained some conservative elements. It failed to evolve broader socio-economic goals. Those working with Swarajists failed to support the cause of Muslim peasantry against zamindars in Bengal.

### GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM

#### Characteristic Features of Indian Communalism

Communalism is basically an ideology which evolved through three broad stages in India—

- (i) **Communal Nationalism**: the notion that since a group or a section of people belong to a particular religious community, their secular interests are the same, i.e., even those matters which have got nothing to do with religion affect all or them equally.
- (ii) **Liberal Communalism**: the notion that since two religious communities have different religious interests, they have different interests in the secular sphere also (i.e., in economic, political and cultural spheres).
- (iii) **Extreme Communalism**: the notion that not only different religious communities have different interests, but these interests are also incompatible i.e., two communities cannot co-exist because the interests of one community come into conflict with those of the other.

There is nothing unique about Indian communalism. It was the result of the conditions which have, in other societies,

National Movement 1919-1939 151

produced similar phenomena and ideologies such as Fascism, anti-Semitism, racism, the Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland and the Christian-Muslim conflict in Lebanon.

Bypassing basic economic interests, the communalists claim to protect interests which do not exist.

Communalism is a modern phenomenon—rooted in modern social, economic and political colonial structure—that emerged out of modern politics based on mass mobilisation and popular participation.

Its social roots lay in the rising middle classes who propagated imaginary communal interests to further their own economic interests—communalism was a bourgeois question par excellence.

Communalists were backed in their communal campaign by the colonial administration. Communalism was the channel through which colonialists expanded their social base.

Communalists and colonialists were helped in their sinister motives by the fact that often socio-economic distinctions in Indian society coincided with religious distinction. The inherent class contradictions were given a post-facto communal colouring by the vested interests.

Conservative social reactionary elements gave full support to communalism.

Religiosity itself did not amount to communalism but in a country where lack of education and low awareness of the outside world was a sad reality, religion had the potential of becoming, and was used as, a vehicle of communalism

#### Reasons for Growth of Communalism

Communalism was rooted in modern economic, political and social institutions where new identities were, emerging in a haphazard manner even as the old, pre-modern identities had not ;Iiminished. A clash of this fundamental dichotomy gave rise to a communal ideology.

#### Socio-economic reasons

The professional classes and the bourgeoisie emerged later among the Muslims than among the Hindus. There was rivalry for jobs, trade and industry between the two communities. The Muslim bourgeoisie used all

152 A Brief History of Modern India

the lower middle classes of the Muslims against the Hindu bourgeoisie to further their class interests.

Because of the economic backwardness of India and rampant unemployment, there was ample scope for the colonial government to use concessions, favours and reservations to fuel communal and separatist tendencies. Also, modern political consciousness was late in developing among the Muslims and the dominance of traditional reactionary elements over the Muslim masses helped a communal outlook to take root.

#### British' policy of divide and rule

Muslims were generally looked upon with, suspicion initially, especially after the Wahabi and 1857 revolts, and were subjected to repression and discrimination by the Government. Also, the introduction of English education had undermined. Arabic and Persian learning which added further to the economic backwardness and exclusion of the Muslims from service.

After the 1870s, with signs of the emergence of Indian nationalism and growing politicisation of the educated middle classes, the Government reversed its policy of repression of Muslims and, instead, decided to rally them behind it through concessions, favours and reservations, and used them against nationalist forces. The Government used persons like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to counter the growing influence of the Congress. Sir, Syed Khan had a broadminded and reformist outlook initially but latei he started supporting the colonial government, exhorting the Muslim masses to stay away from the Congress and not to get politicised. He also started talking of separate interests of Hindus and Muslims.

#### Communalism in history writing

Initially suggested by imperialist historians and later adopted by some chauvinist Indian historians, the communal interpretation of Indian history portrayed the ancient phase as the Hindu phase and the medieval

phase as the Muslim phase. The conflicts of ruling classes during the medieval phase were distorted and exaggerated as Hindu-Muslim conflicts.

#### Side-effects of socio-religious reform movements

Reform movements such as Wahabi Movement among Muslims and

National Movement 1919-1939 153

Shuddhi among Hindus with their militant overtones made the role of religion more vulnerable to communalism. Reforms, at times, were seen as a process of insulating one community from the influence of another religious community.

#### Side-effects of militant nationalism

The early nationalists made conscious efforts to remove minority fears. Dadabhai Naoroji, presiding over the second Congress session (1886), declared the intentions of the Congress not to raise socioreligious questions in its forums. In 1889 the Congress decided not to take up any issue opposed by the Muslims. But later, with the coming of militant nationalism, a distinct Hindu nationalist tinge was palpable in the nationalist politics. For instance, Tilak's Ganapati and Shivaji festivals and anti-cow slaughter campaigns created much suspicion. Aurobindo's vision, of an Aryanised world, Swadeshi Movement with elements like dips in the Ganga and revolutionary terrorism with oath-taking before goddesses were hardly likely to enthuse Muslims into these campaigns in a big way. The communal element in the Lucknow Pact (1916) and the Khilafat agitation (1920-22) was too visible to be of insignificant consequences.

#### Communal reaction by majority community

Naturally, the minority communalism met with a reaction from the majority community which set up militant organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha (established in 1915) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS—established in 1925). The resultant one-upmanship of different versions of communal tendencies was one factor which deterred any effective counter-offensive against communalism.

#### Evolution of the Two-Nation Theory

The development of the two-nation theory over the years is as follows: 1887: There was a frontal attack on the Congress by Dufferin, the viceroy, and Colvin, the Lt. Governor of the United Provinces. Syed Ahmed Khan and Raja Shiv Prasad of Banars were propped up as an anti-Congress front by the Government. Syed Ahmed Khan appealed to the educated Muslims to stay away from the Congress, although some

154 A Brief History of Modern India

Muslims did join the Congress. These included Badruddin Tyabji, Mir Musharraf A. Bhimji and Hamid Ali Khan.

1906: Agha Khan led a Muslim delegation (called the Shimla delegation) to the viceroy, Lord Minto, to demand separate electorates for Muslims at all levels and that the Muslim representation should be commensurate not only with their numerical strength but also with their "political

importance and their contribution to the British Empire". Minto assured them of special communal representation in excess of their population for their "extraordinary service" to the empire.

1907: The All India Muslim League was founded by Agha Khan, Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Nawab Waqar-ul-Mulk to preach loyalty to the British Government and to keep the Muslim intelligentsia away from the Congress.

1909: Separate electorates were awarded under Morley-Minto Reforms.

1909: Punjab Hindu Sabha was founded by U.N. Mukherji and Lal Chandel.

1915: First session of All India Hindu Mahasabha was held under the aegis of the Maharaja of Qasim Bazar.

1912-24: During this period, the Muslim League was dominated by younger Muslim nationalists such as Mohammad Ali, Maulana Azad and Jinnah. But their nationalism was inspired by a communal view of political questions.

1916: The Congress accepted the Muslim League demand of separate electorates and the Congress and the League presented joint demands to the Government. But the Congress and the League came together as separate political entities and the Congress gave political legitimacy to the existence of the Muslim League.

1920-22: Muslims participated in the Rowlatt and Khilafat Non-Cooperation agitations but there was a communal element in the political outlook of Muslims.

1920s: The shadow of communal riots loomed large over the country. The Arya Samajists started Shuddhi (purification) and Sangathan (organisation) movements. The Shuddhi

#### National Movement 1919-1939 155

movement was aimed at reconverting to Hinduism the converts to Islam. The Muslims started the Tabligh and Tanzeem movements in retaliation.

Some nationalists also turned communal. The Swarajists were divided along communal lines and the Responsivists among them joined the Hindu Mahasabha. The Ali brothers, after having put up a spectacular united front with the Congress, accused the Congress of protecting only Hindu interests.

The Congress failed to evolve a suitable strategy to counter the rise of communalism.

1928: The Nehru Report on constitutional reforms as suggested by the Congress was opposed by Muslim hardliners and the Sikh League. Jinnah proposed fourteen points demanding separate electorates and reservation



for Muslims in government service and self-governing bodies. By negotiating with the Muslim League, the Congress made a number of mistakes:

1. It gave legitimacy to the politics of the League, thus giving recognition to the division of society into separate communities with separate interests.
2. It undermined the role of secular, nationalist Muslims.
3. Concessions to one community prompted another community to demand similar concessions.
4. This diverted attention from launching all-out attack on communalism.

1930-34: Some Muslim groups, such as Jamaat-i-ulernai-Hind, State of Kashmir and Khudai Khidmatgars participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement but overall the participation of Muslims was nowhere near the level of Khilafat agitation. While the Congress stayed away from two of the three round table conferences held in London to discuss further constitutional reforms, the communalists attended all three of them.

1932: Communal Award accepted all Muslim communal demands contained in the 14 points.

After 1937: After the Muslim League performed badly in the 1937 provincial elections, it decided to resort to extreme

#### 156 A Brief History of Modern India

communalism. There began a tendency to project the Muslims, not as a minority but as a separate nation (in the early 1930s this idea of a separate Muslim nation was proposed by a young Muslim intellectual Rahrnat All and later developed further by poet Iqbal). From now onwards, communalism was organised as a mass movement with its base among middle and upper classes. Vicious propaganda was launched against the Congress by Z.A. Suleri, F.M. Durrani, Fazl-ul-Haq, etc. Extreme communalism was based on fear, hatred and violence of word and deed.

Till 1937 there had been liberal communalism, centred around safeguards and reservations. It was communal while upholding certain liberal, democratic, humanistic and nationalistic values and the notion that these diverse communities could be welded together into one nation in one national interest.

The extreme communalism of Muslims found its echo in militant communal nationalism of Hindus represented by organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and RSS and thoughts of leaders like Golwalkar. There were several reasons for the advent of extreme communalism.

1. With increasing radicalisation, the reactionary elements searched for a social base through channels of communalism.
2. The colonial administration had exhausted all other means to divide nationalists.
3. Earlier failures to challenge communal tendencies had emboldened the communal forces.

1937-39: Jinnah blocked all avenues for conciliation by forwarding the impossible demand that the Congress should declare itself a Hindu



organisation and recognise the Muslim League as the sole representative of the Indian Muslims.

**March 24, 1940:** The 'Pakistan Resolution' was passed at the Lahore session of the Muslim League calling for "grouping of all geographically contiguous Muslim majority areas (mainly north-western and eastern India) into independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign,

National Movement 1919-1939 157

Views

The question of majority and minority community is a creation of the British Government and would disappear with their withdrawal. M.K. Gandhi

We divide and they rule. Maulana Mohammad Ali

After 1940 it was clear as daylight to the Muslims that their real destiny was neither a second class citizenship in a uni national Hindu state, nor even the doubtful partnership in a multinational India but a separate nationhood with a separate homeland.

#### History of Freedom Movement of Pakistan

The independent sovereign nation of Pakistan was born in the Muslim University of Aligarh. Agha Khan and adequate safeguards to Muslims in other areas where they are in a minority".

During Second World War The British Indian Government a virtual veto to the League on political settlement. The League made full use of this privilege and stuck to its demand of a separate Pakistan throughout the negotiations under the August Offer, Cripps' proposals, Shimla Conference and Cabinet Mission Plan. Finally, it got what it had aspired for—an independent Pakistan comprising Muslim majority areas of Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier Province and Bengal in 1947.

#### ANTI-SIMON COMMISSION UPSURGE

There was a chorus of protest by all Indians against the appointment of an all-white, seven-member Indian Statutory Commission, popularly known as the Simon Commission (after the name of its chairman Sir John Simon), on November 8, 1927. The commission was to recommend to the Government whether India was ready for further constitutional reforms and on what lines. (Although constitutional reforms were due only in 1929, the Conservative Government, then in power

158 A Brief History of Modern India

in Britain, feared defeat by the Labour Party and thus did not want to leave the question of the future of Britain's most prized colony in "irresponsible Labour hands".) The Conservative Secretary of State, Lord Birkenhead, who had constantly talked of the inability of Indians to formulate a concrete scheme of constitutional reforms which had the support of wide sections of Indian political opinion, was responsible for the appointment of the Simon Commission.

The Indian response against the commission was immediate and nearly unanimous. What angered the Indians most was the exclusion of Indians from the commission and the basic notion behind the exclusion that foreigners would discuss and decide upon India's fitness for self-government. This notion was seen as a violation of the principle of self-determination, and a deliberate insult to the self-respect of Indians.

#### Congress Response

The Congress session in Madras (December 1927) meeting under the presidency of M.A. Ansari decided to boycott the commission "at every stage and in every form". Meanwhile Nehru succeeded in getting a snap resolution passed at the session, declaring complete independence as the goal of the Congress.

Those who decided to support the Congress call of boycott included the Liberals of the Hindu Mahasabha and the majority faction of the Muslim League under Jinnah. Some others, such as the Unionists in Punjab and the Justice Party in the south, decided not to boycott the commission.

#### Public Response

The commission landed in Bombay on February 3, 1928. On that day, a countrywide hartal was organised and mass rallies held. Wherever the commission went, there were black flag demonstrations, hartals and slogans of 'Simon Go Back'.

A significant feature of this upsurge was that a new generation of youth got their first taste of political action. They played the most active part in the protest, giving it a militant flavour. The youth leagues and conferences got a real fillip. Nehru and Subhash emerged as leaders of this new wave

National Movement 1919-1939 159

of youth and students. Both travelled extensively, addressed and presided over conferences. This upsurge among the youth also provided a fertile ground for the germination and spread of new radical ideas of socialism reflected in the emergence of groups such as the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Workers' and Peasants' Parties and Hindustani Sewa Dal (Karnataka).

#### Police Repression

The police came down heavily on demonstrators; there were lathicharges not sparing even the senior leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru and G.B. Pant were beaten up in Lucknow. Lala Lajpat Rai received severe blows on his chest in October 1928 which proved fatal and he died on November 17, 1928.

#### Impact of Appointment of Simon Commission

The impact of the appointment of the Simon Commission on Indian politics was two-fold:

- (i) It gave a stimulus to radical forces demanding not just complete independence but major socio-economic reforms on socialist lines.
- (ii) The challenge of Lord Birkenhead to Indian politicians to produce an agreed constitution was accepted by various political sections, and thus prospects for Indian unity seemed bright at that point of time.

#### NEHRU REPORT

As an answer to Lord Birkenhead's challenge, an All Parties Conference met in February 1928 and appointed a subcommittee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution. This was the first major attempt by the Indians to draft a constitutional framework for the country. The committee included Tej Bahadur Sapru, Subhash Bose, M.S. Aney, Mangal Singh, Ali Imam, Shuab Qureshi and G.R. Pradhan as its members. The report was finalised by August 1928. The recommendations of the Nehru Committee were unanimous except in one respect—while the majority favoured the "dominion status" as the basis of the Constitution, a section of it wanted "complete independence" as the basis, with the majority section giving the latter section liberty of action.

#### 160 A Brief History of Modern India

##### Main Recommendations

The Nehru Report confined itself to British India, as it envisaged the future link-up of British India with the princely states on a federal basis. For the dominion it recommended:

1. Dominion status on lines of self-governing dominions as the form of government desired by Indians (much to the chagrin of younger, militant section—Nehru being prominent among them).
2. Rejection of separate electorates which had been the basis of constitutional reforms so far; instead, a demand for joint electorates with reservation of seats for Muslims at the centre and in provinces where they were in minority (and not in those where Muslims were in majority, such as Punjab and Bengal) in proportion to the Muslim population there with right to contest additional seats.
3. Linguistic provinces.
4. Nineteen fundamental rights including equal rights for women, right to form unions, and universal adult suffrage.
5. Responsible government at the centre and in provinces—
  - The Indian Parliament at the centre to consist of a 500-member House of Representatives elected on the basis of adult suffrage, a 200-member Senate to be elected by provincial councils; the House of Representatives to have a tenure of 5 years and the Senate, one of 7 years; the central government to be headed by a governor-general, appointed by the British Government but paid out of Indian revenues, who would act on the advice of the central executive council responsible to the Parliament.
  - Provincial councils' to have a 5-year tenure, headed by a governor acting on the advice of the provincial executive council.
6. Full protection to cultural and religious interests of Muslims.
7. Complete dissociation of state from religion.

### The Muslim and Hindu Communal Responses

Though the process of drafting a constitutional framework was begun

National Movement 1919-1939 161

enthusiastically and unitedly by political leaders, communal differences crept in and the Nehru Report got involved in controversies over the issue of communal representation.

Earlier, in December 1927, a large number of Muslim leaders had met at Delhi at the Muslim League session and evolved four proposals for Muslim demands to be incorporated in the draft constitution. These proposals, which were accepted by the Madras session of the Congress (December 1927), came to be known as the 'Delhi Proposals'. These were

- \* joint electorates in place of separate electorates with reserved seats for Muslims;
- \* one-third representation to Muslims in Central Legislative Assembly;
- \* representation to Muslims in Punjab and Bengal in proportion to their population;
- \* formation of three new Muslim majority provinces— Sindh, Baluchistan and North-West Frontier Province.

However, the Hindu Mahasabha was vehemently opposed to the proposals for creating new Muslim-majority provinces and reservation of seats for Muslims majorities in Punjab and Bengal (which would ensure Muslim control over legislatures in both). It also demanded a strictly unitary structure. This attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha complicated matters. In the course of the deliberations of the All Parties Conference, the Muslim League dissociated itself and stuck to its demand for reservation of seats for Muslims, especially in the Central Legislature and in Muslim majority provinces. Thus, Motilal Nehru and other leaders drafting the report found themselves in a dilemma: if the demands of the Muslim communal opinion were accepted, the Hindu communalists would withdraw their support, if the latter were satisfied, the Muslim leaders would get estranged.

The concessions made in the Nehru Report to Hindu communalists included the following:

1. Joint electorates proposed everywhere but reservation for Muslims only where in minority;
2. Sindh to be detached from Bombay only after

162 A Brief History of Modern India

dominion status was granted and subject to weightage to Hindu minority in Sindh;

3. Political structure proposed was broadly unitary, as residual powers rested with the centre.

### Amendments Proposed by Jinnah

At the All Parties Conference held at Calcutta in December 1928 to consider the Nehru Report, Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim League, proposed three amendments to the report:

1. One-third representation to Muslims in the Central Legislature

2. Reservation to Muslims in Bengal and Punjab legislatures proportionate to their population, till adult suffrage was established
3. Residual powers to provinces.

These demands not being accommodated, Jinnah went back to the Shafi faction of the Muslim League and in March 1929 gave fourteen points which were to become the basis of all future propaganda of the Muslim League.

#### jinnah's Fourteen Demands

1. Federal Constitution with residual powers to provinces.
2. Provincial autonomy.
3. No constitutional amendment by the centre without the concurrence of the states constituting the Indian federation.
4. All legislatures and elected bodies to have adequate representation of Muslims in every province without reducing a majority of Muslims in a province to a minority or equality.
5. Adequate representation to Muslims in the services and in self-governing bodies.
6. One-third Muslim representation in the Central Legislature.
7. In any cabinet at the centre or in the provinces, one-third to be Muslims.
8. Separate electorates.
9. No bill or resolution in any legislature to be passed if three-fourths of a minority community consider such a bill or resolution to be against their interests.
10. Any territorial redistribution not to affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal and NWFP.

National Movement 1919-1939 163

11. Separation of Sindh from Bombay.
12. Constitutional reforms in the NWFP and Baluchistan.
13. Full religious freedom to all communities.
14. Protection of Muslim rights in religion, culture, education and language.

Not only were the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh communalists unhappy about the Nehru Report, but the younger section of the Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Bose were also angered. The younger section regarded the idea of dominion status in the report as a step backward, and the developments at the All Parties Conference strengthened their criticism of the dominion status idea. Nehru and Subhash Bose rejected the Congress' modified goal and jointly set up the Independence for India League.

#### THE RUN-UP TO CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

##### Calcutta Session of Congress (December 1928)

Here, the Nehru Report was approved but the younger elements led by Nehru, Subhash and Satyamurthy expressed their dissatisfaction with the dominion status as the goal of Congress. Instead, they demanded that the Congress adopt purna swaraj or complete independence as its goal. The older leaders like Gandhi and Motilal Nehru wished that the dominion status demand not be dropped in haste, as consensus over it had been developed with great difficulty over the years. They suggested that a

two-year grace period be given to the Government to accept the demand for a dominion status. Later, under pressure from the younger elements, this period was reduced to one year. Now, the Congress decided that if the Government did not accept, a constitution based on dominion status by the end of the year, the Congress would not only demand complete independence but would also launch a Civil Disobedience Movement to attain its goal.

#### Political Activity during 1929

Gandhi travelled incessantly during 1929 preparing people for direct political action—telling the youth to prepare for the fiery ordeal, helping to organise constructive work in villages and redressing specific grievances (on lines of Bardoli agitation of 1928).

164 A Brief History of Modern India

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) organised a Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee to propagate an aggressive programme of foreign cloth boycott and public burning of foreign cloth. Gandhi initiated the campaign in March 1929 in Calcutta and was arrested. This was followed by bonfires of foreign clothes all over the country.

Other developments which kept the political temperature high during 1929 included the Meerut Conspiracy Case (March), bomb explosion in Central Legislative Assembly by Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt (April) and the coming to power of the Labour Government led by Ramsay MacDonald in England in May.

**Irwin's Statement** (October 31, 1929) "It is implicit in the 1917 declaration (Montagu's statement) that the natural issue of India's progress, as contemplated there, is the attainment of dominion status."

He also promised a Round Table Conference when the Simon Commission submitted its report.

#### Delhi Manifesto

On November 2, 1929, a conference of prominent national leaders issued a "Delhi Manifesto" which demanded

1. that the purpose of the Round Table Conference (RTC) should be to formulate a scheme for implementation of the dominion status (thus acting as a constituent assembly) and the basic principle of dominion status should be immediately accepted;

2. that the Congress should have majority representation at the conference;

3. amnesty and a general policy of conciliation;

Viceroy Irwin rejected these demands on December 23, 1929. The stage of confrontation was to begin now.

#### Lahore Congress and Purna Swaraj

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had done more than anyone else to popularise the concept of purna swaraj, was nominated the president for the Lahore session of the Congress (December 1929) mainly due to Gandhi's backing, (15 out of 18 Provincial Congress Committees had opposed Nehru). Nehru was chosen

National Movement 1919-1939 165

because of the appositeness of the occasion (Congress' acceptance of complete independence as its goal), and to acknowledge the upsurge of youth which had made the anti-Simon campaign a huge success.

Nehru declared in his presidential address, "We have now an open conspiracy to free this country from foreign rule and you, comrades, and all our countrymen and countrywomen are invited to join it" Further explaining that liberation did not mean only throwing off the foreign yoke, he said "I must frankly confess that 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 of 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." Spelling out the methods of struggle, he said, "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".

The following major decisions were taken at the Lahore session-

1. the RTC to be boycotted;
2. complete independence declared as the aim of the Congress;
3. CWC authorised to launch a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes and all members of legislatures asked to resign their seats;
4. January 26, 1930 fixed as the first Independence Day, to be celebrated everywhere.

December 31, 1929 At midnight on the banks of River Ravi, the newly adopted tricolour flag of freedom was hoisted amidst slogans of Inquilab Zindabad.

January 26, 1930 Public meetings were organised all over the country in villages and towns and the independence pledge was read out in local languages and the national flag was hoisted. This pledge made the following points:

- It is the inalienable right of Indians to have freedom.

166 A Brief History of Modern India



- The British Government in India has not only deprived us of freedom and exploited us, but has also ruined us economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. India must therefore sever the British connection and attain purna swaraj or complete independence.
- We are being economically ruined by high revenue, destruction of village industries with no substitutions made, while customs, currency and exchange rate are manipulated to our disadvantage.
- No real political powers are given—rights of free association are denied to us and all administrative talent in us is killed.
- Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings.
- Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly.
- We hold it a crime against man and God to submit any longer to British rule. We will prepare for complete independence by withdrawing, as far as possible, all voluntary association from the British Government and will prepare for civil disobedience through non-payment of taxes. By this an end of this inhuman rule is assured.
- We will carry out the Congress instructions for purpose of establishing purna swaraj.

### CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

#### Gandhi's Eleven Demands

To carry forward the mandate given by the Lahore Congress, Gandhi presented eleven demands to the Government and gave an ultimatum of January 31, 1930 to accept or reject these demands. The demands were as follows.

Issues of General Interest

1. Reduce expenditure on Army and civil services by 50 per cent.
2. Introduce total prohibition.
3. Carry out reforms in Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

National Movement 1919-1939 167

4. Change Arms Act allowing popular control of issue of firearms licences.

5. Release political prisoners.

6. Accept Postal Reservation Bill.

Specific Bourgeois Demands

7. Reduce rupee-sterling exchange ratio to 1s 4d 8. Introduce textile protection.

9. Reserve coastal shipping for Indians.

Specific Peasant Demands

10. Reduce land revenue by 50 per cent.

11. Abolish salt tax and government's salt monopoly.

#### February 1930

With no positive response forthcoming from the Government on these demands, the Congress Working Committee invested Gandhi with full powers to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) at a time and place of his choice. By February-end, Gandhi had decided to make, salt, the central formula for the CDM.

Why Salt was Chosen as the Central Formula?



1. As Gandhi said, "There is no other article like salt, outside water, by taxing which the Government can reach the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. It is the most inhuman poll tax the ingenuity of man can devise."
2. Salt in a flash linked the ideal of swaraj with a most concrete and universal grievance of the rural poor (and with no socially divisive implications like a no-rent campaign).
3. Salt afforded a paltry but psychologically important income, like khadi, for the poor through self-help.
4. Like khadi, again, it offered to the urban adherents the opportunity of a symbolic identification with mass suffering.

#### Dandi March (March 12-April 6, 1930)

On March 2, 1930, Gandhi informed the viceroy of his plan of action. According to this plan (few realised its significance when it was first announced), Gandhi, along with a band of seventy-eight members of Sabarmati Ashram, was to march from his headquarters in Ahmedabad through the villages of Gujarat

#### 168 A Brief History of Modern India

for 240 miles. On reaching the coast at Dandi, the salt law was to be violated by collecting salt from the beach.

Even before the proposed march began, thousands thronged to the ashram. Gandhi gave the following directions for future action. Wherever possible civil disobedience of the salt law should be started. Foreign liquor and cloth shops can be picketed.

- We can refuse to pay taxes if we have the requisite strength. Lawyers can give up practice.
- Public can boycott law courts by refraining from litigation.
- Government servants can resign from their posts.
- All these should be subject to one condition—truth and non-violence as means to attain swaraj should be faithfully adhered to.
- Local leaders should be obeyed after Gandhi's arrest.

The historic march, marking, the launch of the Civil Disobedience Movement, began on March 12, and Gandhi broke the salt law by picking up a handful of salt at Dandi on April 6. The violation of the law was seen as a symbol of the Indian people's resolve not to live under British-made laws and therefore under British rule. The march, its progress and its impact on the people was well covered by newspapers. In Gujarat, 300 village officials resigned in answer to Gandhi's appeal. Congress workers engaged themselves in grassroot level organisational tasks.

#### Spread of Salt Disobedience

Once the way was cleared by Gandhi's ritual at Dandi, defiance of the salt laws started all over the country. In Tamil Nadu, C. Rajagopalachari led a march from Tiruchirapally to Vedaranniyam. In Malabar, K. Kelappan led a march from Calicut to Poyannur. In Assam, satyagrahis walked from Sylhet to Noakhali (Bengal) to make salt. In Andhra, a number of sibirams (camps) came up in different districts as headquarters of salt satyagraha.

Nehru's arrest in April 1930 for defiance of the salt law

National Movement 1919-1939 169

evoked huge demonstrations in Madras, Calcutta and Karachi. Gandhi's arrest came on May 4, 1930 when he had announced that he would lead a raid on Dharsana Salt Works on the west coast. Gandhi's arrest was followed by massive protests in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and in Sholapur, where the response was the fiercest. After Gandhi's arrest, the CWC sanctioned:

- non-payment of revenue in Ryotwari areas;
- no chowkidara tax campaign in zamindari areas; and
- violation of forest laws in the Central Provinces.

#### Other Forms of Upsurge

Other areas in the country showed different forms of protest. Chittagong, Surya Sen's Chittagong Revolt Group carried out a raid on two armouries and declared the establishment of a provisional government.

Peshawar, Here, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's educational and social reform work among the Pathans had politicised them. Gaffar Khan, also called Badshah Khan and Frontier Gandhi, had started the first Pushto political monthly Pukhtoon and had organised a volunteer brigade 'Khudai Khidmatgars', popularly known as the 'Red-Shirts', who were pledged to the freedom struggle and non-violence.

On April 23, 1930, the arrest of Congress leaders NWFP led to mass demonstrations in Peshawar which was virtually in the hands of the crowds for more than a week till order was restored on May 4. This was, followed by a reign of terror and martial law. It was here that a section of Garhwal Rifles soldiers refused to fire on an unarmed crowd. This upsurge in a province with 92 per cent Muslim population left the British Government nervous.

Sholapur, This industrial town of southern Maharashtra saw the fiercest response to Gandhi's arrest. Textile workers went on a strike from May 7 and along with other residents burnt liquor shops and other symbols of government authority such as railway stations, police stations, municipal buildings, law courts, etc. The activists established a virtual parallel government which could only be dislodged with martial law after May 16.

170 A Brief History of Modern India

National Movement 1919-1939 171

Dharsana, On May 21, 1930, Sarojini Naidu, Imam Sahib and Manilal (Gandhi's son) took up the unfinished task of leading a raid on Dharsana Salt Works. The unarmed and peaceful crowd was met with a brutal lathicharge which left 2 dead and 320 injured. This new form of salt satyagraha was eagerly adopted by people in Wadala (Bombay), Karnataka (Sanikatta Salt Works), Andhra, Midnapore, Balasore, Puri and Cuttack.

**Bihar**, A campaign was organised for **refusal to pay chowkidara tax** and a call was given for resignation of chowkidars and influential members of chowkidari panchayat who appointed these chowkidars. This campaign was particularly successful in **Monghyr, Saran and Bhagalpur**. The Government retaliated with beatings, torture and confiscation of property.

Bengal, Anti-chowkidara tax and anti-union board tax campaign here was met with repression and confiscation of property.

Gujarat, The impact was felt in Anand, Borsad and Nadiad areas, in Kheda district, Bardoli in Surat district and Jambusar in Bharuch district. A determined **no-tax movement** was organised here which included **refusal to pay, land revenue**. Villagers crossed the border into neighbouring princely states (such as Baroda) with their families and belongings and camped in the open for months to evade, police repression. The police retaliated by destroying their property and confiscating their land.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Central Provinces, These areas saw defiance of forest laws such as grazing and timber restrictions and public sale of illegally acquired forest produce.

**Assam**, A powerful agitation was organised against the infamous **'Cunningham circular'** which forced parents, guardians and students to furnish assurances of good behaviour.

**United Provinces**, A no revenue campaign was organised; a call was given to zamindars to refuse to pay revenue to the Government. Under a **no rent campaign**, a call was given to **tenants against zamindars**. Since most of the zamindars were loyalists, the campaign became virtually a no rent campaign. The activity picked up speed in **October 1930**, especially in Agra and Rai Bareilly.

Manipur and Nagaland, These areas took a brave part in the movement. At the young age of thirteen, **Rani Gaidinliu of Nagaland raised the banner of revolt against foreign rule**. She was captured in **1932** and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mobilisation of masses was also carried out through prabhat pheries, vanar senas, manjari senas, secret patrilcas and magic lantern shows.

#### **Impact of Agitation**

1. Imports of foreign cloth and other items fell.
2. Government income from liquor, excise and land revenue fell.
3. Elections to Legislative Assembly were largely boycotted.

#### **Extent of Mass Participation**

Several sections of the population participated in the movement.

##### **Women**

Gandhi had specially asked women to play a leading part in the movement. Soon, they became a familiar sight, picketing outside liquor shops, opium dens and shops selling foreign cloth. For Indian women, the movement was the most liberating experience and can truly be said to have marked their entry into the public sphere.

Students

Along with women, **students and youth** played the most prominent part in boycott of foreign cloth and liquor.

#### **Muslims**

The Muslim participation was nowhere near the 1920-22 level because of appeals by Muslim leaders to Muslim masses to stay away from the movement and because of, active government encouragement to communal dissension. Still, some areas such as the NWFP saw an overwhelming participation. Middle class Muslim participation was quite significant in Senhatta, Tripura, Gaibandha, Bagura and Noakhali. In Dacca, Muslim leaders, shopkeepers, lower class people and upper class women were active. The Muslim weaving community in Bihar, Delhi and Lucknow were also effectively mobilised.

172 A Brief History of Modern India

#### **Merchants and Petty Traders**

They were very enthusiastic. Traders' associations, and commercial bodies were active in implementing the boycott, especially in Tamil Nadu and Punjab.

#### **Tribals**

Tribals were active participants in Central Provinces, Maharashtra and Karnataka.

#### **Workers**

The workers participated in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Sholapur, etc.

**Peasants** were active in UP, Bihar and Gujarat.

#### **Government Response—Efforts for Truce**

The Government's attitude throughout 1930 was ambivalent; it was puzzled and perplexed. It faced the classic dilemma of 'damned if you do, damned if you don't—if force was applied, the Congress cried 'repression', and if little was done, the Congress cried 'victory'. Either way the hegemony of the Government was eroded. Even, Gandhi's arrest came after much vacillation. But once the repression began, the ordinances banning civil liberties were freely used, including gagging of the press. Provincial governments were given freedom to civil disobedience organisations. **The CWC was, however, declared illegal till June.** Lathicharge and firirig on unarmed crowds left several killed and wounded, while 90,000 satyagrahis Including Gandhi and other Congress leaders were imprisoned.

The government repression and publication of the Simon Commission Report, which contained no mention of dominion status and was in other ways also a regressive document, further upset even moderate political opinion.

In July 1930 the viceroy suggested a round table conference (RTC) and reiterated the goal of dominion status. He also accepted the suggestion that **Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar be allowed to explore the possibility of peace between the Congress and the Government.**

In August 1930 Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru were taken to Yeravada Jail to meet Gandhi and discuss the possibility of a settlement. The Nehrus and Gandhi unequivocally reiterated the demands of:

National Movement 1919-1939 173

1. right of secession from Britain;
  2. complete national government with control over defence and finance; and
  3. an independent tribunal to settle Britain's financial claims.
- Talks broke down at this point.

#### FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE (NOVEMBER 1930-JANUARY 1931)

This was the first ever conference arranged between the British and the Indians as equals. While the Congress and most business leaders boycotted the First RTC, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Liberals and princes attended it. Virtually every delegate reiterated that a constitutional discussion to which the Congress was not a party was meaningless. Also, at the conference, the British Prime Minister hinted at an olive branch to the Congress and expressed the hope that the Congress would attend the next RTC.

#### GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

On January 25, 1931 Gandhi and all other members of the CWC were released unconditionally. The CWC authorised Gandhi to initiate discussions with the viceroy. As a result of these discussions, a pact was signed between the viceroy, representing the British Indian Government, and Gandhi, representing the Indian people, in Delhi on February 14, 1931. This Delhi Pact, also known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, placed the Congress on an equal footing with the Government.

Irwin on behalf of the Government agreed on

1. immediate release of all political prisoners not convicted of violence;
2. remission of all fines not yet collected;
3. return of all lands not yet sold to third parties;
4. lenient treatment to those government servants who had resigned;
5. right to make salt in coastal villages for personal consumption (not for sale);
6. right to peaceful and non-aggressive picketing; and

174 A Brief History of Modern India

7. withdrawal of emergency ordinances.

The viceroy, however, turned down two of Gandhi's demands—

- (i) public inquiry into police excesses, and
- (ii) commutation of Bhagat Singh and his comrades' death sentence to life sentence.

Gandhi on behalf of the Congress agreed—

- (i) to suspend the civil disobedience movement, and
- (ii) to participate in the next RTC on the constitutional question around the three pillars of federation, Indian responsibility, and reservations and safeguards that may be

necessary in India's interests (covering such areas as defence, external affairs, position of minorities, financial credit of India and discharge of other obligations).

(iii)

#### EVALUATION OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

##### Was Gandhi-Irwin Pact a Retreat?

Gandhi's decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement as agreed under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was, not a retreat, because:

- (i) mass movements are necessarily short-lived;
- (ii) capacity of the masses to make sacrifices, unlike that of the activists, is limited; and
- (iii) there were signs of exhaustion after September 1930, especially among shopkeepers and merchants, who had participated so enthusiastically.

No doubt, youth were disappointed. They had participated enthusiastically and wanted the world to end with a bang and not with a whimper. Peasants of Gujarat were disappointed because their lands were not restored immediately (indeed, were restored only during the rule of the Congress ministry in the province). But vast masses of people were jubilant that the Government had to regard their movement as significant and treat their leader as an equal, and sign a pact with him. The political prisoners when released from jails were given a hero's welcome.

##### Compared to Non-Cooperation Movement

1. The stated objective this time was complete independence and not just remedying two specific wrongs and a vaguely-worded swaraj.

National Movement 1919-1939 175

- 2. The methods involved violation of law from the very beginning and not just non-cooperation with foreign rule.
- 3. There was a decline in forms of protests involving the intelligentsia, such as lawyers giving up practice, students giving up government schools to join national schools and colleges.
- 4. Muslim participation was nowhere near the NonCooperation Movement level.
- 5. No major labour upsurge coincided with the movement.
- 6. But massive participation of peasants and business groups compensated for decline of other features.
- 7. The number of those imprisoned was about three times more this time.
- 8. The Congress was organisationally stronger.

##### Views

India is one vast prison-house. I repudiate this law. M.K. Gandhi to Lord.

Gandhi was the best policeman the British had in India. Ellen Wilkinson.

Dandi March is the kindergarten stage of revolution' based on the notion that King Emperor can be unseated by boiling water in a kettle. Brailsford, an English journalist.

Irwin

ia. based boiling malist

#### KARACHI CONGRESS SESSION 1931

In March 1931, a special session of the Congress was held at Karachi to endorse the Gandhi-Irwin or Delhi Pact. Six days before the session (which was held on March 29) Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru had been executed. Throughout Gandhi's route to Karachi, he was greeted with black flag demonstrations by the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, in protest against his failure to secure commutation of the death sentence for Bhagat and his comrades.

Congress Resolutions at Karachi

- While disapproving of and dissociating itself from political violence, the Congress admired the "bravery" and "sacrifice" of the three martyrs.

176 A Brief History of Modern India

The Delhi Pact was endorsed.

- The goal of purna swaraj was reiterated. Two resolutions were adopted—one on Fundamental Rights and the other on National Economic Programme—which made the session particularly memorable. The resolution on Fundamental Rights guaranteed—

- \* free speech and free press
- \* right to form associations
- \* right to assemble
- \* universal adult franchise
- \* equal legal rights irrespective of caste, creed and sex
- \* neutrality of state in religious matters
- \* free and compulsory primary education
- \* protection to culture, language, script of minorities and linguistic groups

The resolution on National Economic Programme included—

- \* substantial reduction in rent and revenue
- \* exemption from rent for uneconomic holdings
- \* relief from agricultural indebtedness
- \* control of usury
- \* better conditions of work including a living wage, limited hours of work and protection of women workers
- \* right to workers and peasants to form unions
- \* state ownership and control of key industries, mines and means of transport.

This was the first time the Congress spelt out what swaraj would mean for the masses—"in order to end exploitation of masses, political freedom must include economic freedom of starving millions."

The Karachi Resolution was to remain, in essence, the basic political and economic programme of the Congress in the years.

SECOND RTC AND SECOND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

The Second Round Table Conference, which the Congress had agreed to attend under the Delhi Pact, was held in London

National Movement 1919-1939 177

in December 1931. Not much was expected from the conference because of the following reasons.

1. The Right Wing in Britain led by Churchill strongly objected to the British Government negotiating with the Congress on an equal basis. They, instead, demanded a strong government in India. The Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald headed a Conservative-dominated cabinet with a weak and reactionary secretary of state, Samuel Hoare.
2. An overwhelming majority of RTC delegates were conservative, loyalist, reactionary and communal, men who had been used by the colonial government to assert that the Congress did not represent all Indians vis-a-vis imperialism, and to neutralise Gandhi and his efforts.
3. The session soon got deadlocked on the question of the minorities. Separate electorates were being demanded by the Muslims, depressed classes, Christians and Anglo-Indians. All these came together in a "Minorities' Pact". Gandhi fought desperately against this concerted move to make all constitutional progress conditional on the solving of this issue.
4. Princes were also not as enthusiastic about a federation, especially after the possibility of the formation of a Congress government at the centre had receded after the suspension of civil disobedience movement

The session ended with MacDonald's announcement of:

- (i) two Muslim majority provinces—NWFP and Sindh;
- (ii) the setting up of Indian Consultative Committee;
- (iii) three expert committees—finance, franchise and states; and
- (iv) the prospect of a unilateral British Communal Award if Indians failed to agree.

The Government failed to concede the basic Indian demand of freedom. Gandhi returned to India on December 28, 1931. On December 29, the CWC decided to resume the civil disobedience movement.

During Truce Period (March-December 1931), Some activity during this period kept alive the spirit of defiance. In the United Provinces, the Congress had been leading a

178 A Brief History of Modern India

National Movement 1919-1939 179

movement for rent reduction and against summary evictions.

In the NWFP, severe repression had been unleashed against the Khudai Khidmatgars and the peasants led by them who were agitating against the brutal methods of tax-collection by the Government. In Bengal, draconian ordinances and mass detentions had been used, in the name of fighting terrorism. In September 1931, there was a firing incident on political prisoners in Hijli Jail.



#### Changed Government Attitude

The higher British officials had drawn their own lessons from the Delhi Pact which had raised the political prestige of the Congress and the political morale of the people and had undermined British prestige. They were now determined to reverse this trend. There were three main considerations in British policy:

1. Gandhi would not be permitted to build up the tempo for a mass movement again.
2. Goodwill of the Congress was not required, but the confidence of those who supported the British against the Congress-government functionaries, loyalists, etc.—was very essential.
3. The national movement would not be allowed to consolidate itself in rural areas.

After the CWC had decided to resume the civil disobedience movement, the new Viceroy Willingdon refused a meeting with Gandhi on December 31. On January 4, 1932, Gandhi was arrested.

#### Government Action

A series of repressive ordinances were issued which ushered in a virtual martial law, though under civilian control, or a "Civil Martial Law". Congress organisations at all levels were banned; arrests were made of activists, leaders, sympathisers; properties were confiscated; Gandhi ashrams were occupied. Repression was particularly harsh on women. Press was gagged and nationalist literature, banned.

#### Popular Response

People responded with anger. Though unprepared, the response was massive. In the first four months alone, about 80,000 satyagrahis, mostly urban and rural poor, were jailed. Other forms of protest, included picketing of shops selling liquor and foreign cloth, illegal gatherings, non-violent demonstrations, celebrations of national days, symbolic hoistings of national flag, non-payment of chowkidara tax, salt satyagraha, forest law violations and installation of a secret radio transmitter near Bombay. This phase of the civil disobedience movement coincided with upsurges in two princely states—Kashmir and Alwar. But this phase of the movement could not be sustained for long because (i) Gandhi and other leaders had no time to build up the tempo; and (ii) the masses were not prepared.

Finally in-April 1934, Gandhi decided to withdraw the civil disobedience movement. Though people had been cowed down by superior force, they had not lost political faith in the Congress—they had won freedom in their hearts.

#### COMMUNAL AWARD AND POONA PACT

The Communal Award was announced by the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in August 1932. This was yet another expression of British policy of divide and rule.

The Muslims, Sikhs and Christians had already been recognised as minorities. The Communal Award declared the depressed classes also to be minorities, and entitled them to separate electorates'.

Congress Stand Though opposed to separate electorates, the Congress was not in favour of changing the Communal Award without the consent of the minorities. Thus, while strongly disagreeing with the Communal Award, the Congress decided neither to accept it nor to reject it.

The effort to separate the depressed classes from the rest of the Hindus by treating them as separate political entities was vehemently opposed by all the nationalists.

#### Gandhi's Response

Gandhi saw the Communal Award as an attack on Indian unity and nationalism. He thought it

National Movement 1919-1939 180 A Brief History of Modern India

was harmful to both Hinduism and to the depressed classes since it provided no answer to the socially degraded position of the depressed classes. Once the depressed classes were treated as a separate political entity, he argued, the question of abolishing untouchability would get undermined, while separate electorates would ensure that the untouchables remained untouchables in perpetuity. He said that what was required was not protection of the so called interests of the depressed classes but root and branch eradication of untouchability

Gandhi demanded that the depressed classes be elected through joint and if possible a wider electorate through universal franchise, while expressing no objection to the demand for a larger number of reserved seats. And to press for his demands, he went on an indefinite fast on September 20, 1932 Now leaders of various persuasions, including B.R. Ambedkar, M.C. Rajah and Madan Mohan Malaviya got together to hammer out a compromise contained in the Poona Pact.

Poona Pact was Signed by B.R. Ambedkar on behalf of the depressed classes in September 1932, the Pact abandoned separate electorates for the depressed classes. But the seats reserved for the depressed classes were increased from 71 to 147 in provincial legislatures and 18 per cent of the total in the central legislature.

The Poona Pact was accepted by the Government as an amendment to the Communal Award.

**GANDHI'S HARIJAN CAMPAIGN** Determined to undo the divisive intentions of the Government's divide and rule policy, Gandhi gave up all his other preoccupations and launched a whirlwind campaign against untouchability—first from jail and after his release in August 1933 from the outside.

While in jail, he had set up the All India AntiUntouchability League in September 1932 and had started the

181

weekly Harijan in January 1933. After his release, he shifted to the Satyagraha Ashram in Wardha as he had vowed in 1930 not to return to Sabarmati Ashram unless swaraj was won.

Starting from Wardha, he conducted a Harijan tour of the country in the period from November 1933 to July 1934, covering 20,000 km, collecting money for his newly set up Harijan Sevak Sangh, and propagating removal of untouchability in all its forms. He urged political workers to go to villages and work for social, economic, political and cultural upliftment of the Harijan. He undertook two fasts— on May 8 and August 16, 1934—to convince his followers of the seriousness of his effort and the importance of the issue. These fasts created consternation in nationalist ranks throwing many into an emotional crisis.

Throughout his campaign, Gandhi was attacked by orthodox and reactionary elements. These elements disrupted his meetings, held black flag demonstrations against him and accused him of attacking Hinduism. They also offered support to the Government against the Congress and the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Government obliged them by defeating the Temple Entry Bill in August 1934. Orthodox Hindu opinion in Bengal was against the acceptance of permanent caste Hindu minority status by the Poona Pact.

#### Gandhi's Thoughts on Caste

Throughout his Harijan tour, social work and fasts, Gandhi stressed on certain themes: He put forward a damning indictment of Hindu society for the kind of oppression practised on Harijans.

- He called for the root and branch eradication of untouchability symbolised by his plea to throw open temples to the untouchables.
- He stressed the need for caste Hindus to do "penance" for untold miseries inflicted on Harijans. For this reason he was not hostile to his critics such as He said, "Hinduism dies if untouchability lives, untouchability has to die if Hinduism is to live."
- His entire campaign was based on principles of

#### 182 A Brief History of Modern India

humanism and reason

He said that the shastras do not sanction untouchability, and if they did, they should be ignored as it was against human dignity.

Gandhi was not in favour of mixing up the issue of removal of untouchability with that of inter-caste marriages and inter-dining because he felt that such restrictions existed among caste Hindus and ambrig Harijans themselves, and because the all-India campaign at the time was directed against disabilities specific to Harijans. Similarly, he distinguished between abolition of untouchability and abolition of caste system as such On this point he differed from Ambedkar who advocated annihilation of the caste system to remove untouchability. Gandhi felt that whatever the limitations and, defects of the varnashram system, there was nothing sinful about it, as there was about untouchability. Untouchability, Gandhi felt, was a product of distinctions of high and low and not of the caste system itself. If, it could be purged of this distinction, the varnashram could function in a manner whereby each caste would be complementary to the other rather than being higher or lower. Anyway, that believers and critics of the

caste system should come together in the fight against untouchability, the opposition to which is common to both, was his message.

He believed that the removal of untouchability would have a positive impact on communal and other questions since opposition to untouchability meant opposing the notion of highness and lowness. He was opposed to using compulsion against the orthodox Hindus whom he called sanatanis. They were to be won over by persuasion, by appealing to "their reason and their hearts". His fasts were aimed at inspiring friends and followers to redouble their anti-untouchability work.

Gandhi's Harijan campaign included a programme of internal reform by Harijans covering education, cleanliness, hygiene, giving up eating of beef and carrion and consumption of liquor, and removing untouchability among themselves.

National Movement 1919-1939 183

#### Impact of the Campaign

Gandhi repeatedly described the campaign as not a political movement but as being primarily meant to purify Hinduism and Hindu society. Gradually, the campaign carried the message of nationalism to Harijans who also happened to be the agricultural labourers in most parts of the country, leading to their increasing participation in the national and peasant movements.

STRATEGIC DEBATE Following the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement

There was a two-stage debate on the future strategy of the nationalists—firstly, what course the national movement should take in the immediate future, i.e., during the phase of nonmass struggle (1934-35), and secondly, in 1937, over the question of office acceptance in the context of provincial elections held under the autonomy provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. (The first stage is discussed below. The second stage is discussed later in this chapter.)

#### THE FIRST STAGE DEBATE

At this stage three perspectives were put forward. The first two were traditional responses, while the third one represented the rise of a strong leftist trend within the Congress. The three perspectives were as follows.

1. There should be constructive work on Gandhian lines. There should be constitutional struggle and participation in elections to the Central Legislature (due in 1934) as advocated by M.A. Ansari, Asaf Ali, Bhulabhai Desai, S. Satyarnurthy and B.C. Roy among others. They argued that:

- in a period of political apathy, elections and council work could be utilised to keep up the political interest and morale of the people;
- participation in elections and council work did not amount to faith in constitutional politics;
- another political front would help build up Congress and prepare the masses for the next phase;

this approach would give the Congress a certain amount of prestige and confidence, and a strong presence in councils would serve as an equivalent to the movement.

4. A strong leftist trend within the Congress represented by Nehru was critical of both constructive work and council entry in place of the suspended civil disobedience movement as that would sidetrack political mass action and divert attention from the main issue of struggle against colonialism. Instead, this section favoured resumption and continuation of non-constitutionalist mass struggle, because the situation was still revolutionary owing to continued economic crisis and the readiness of the masses to fight.

5.

#### Nehru's Vision

Nehru said, "The basic goal before Indian people as before people of the world is abolition of capitalism and establishment of socialism!" He considered the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement and council entry "a spiritual defeat", "a surrender of ideals" and "a retreat from revolutionary to reformist mentality".

He suggested that the vested interests be revised in favour of the masses by taking up economic and class demands of peasants and workers, and landlords and capitalists, organising masses in their class organisations—kisan sabhas and trade unions. He argued that these class organisations should be allowed to affiliate with the Congress, thus influencing its policies and activities. There could be no genuine antiimperialist struggle, he said, without incorporating the class struggle of the masses.

#### Nehru's Opposition to Struggle-Truce-Struggle Strategy

A large number of Congressmen led by Gandhi believed that a mass phase of movement (struggle phase) had to be followed by a phase of reprieve (truce phase) before the next stage of mass struggle could be taken up. The truce period, it was argued, would enable the masses to recoup their strength to fight and also give the Government a chance to respond to the demands of the nationalists. The masses could not go on sacrificing indefinitely. If the Government did not

#### National Movement 1919-1939 185

respond positively, the movement could be resumed again with the participation of the masses. This was the Struggle-Truce-Struggle or S-T-S strategy.

Criticising the S-T-S strategy, Nehru argued that the Indian national movement had reached a stage, after the Lahore Congress call for purna swaraj programme, in which there should be a continuous confrontation and conflict with imperialism till it was overthrown. He advocated maintenance of a "continuous direct action" policy by the Congress and without the interposition of a constitutionalist phase. Real power, he said, cannot be won by two annas and four annas. Against an S-T-S strategy, he suggested a Struggle-Victory (S-V) strategy.

Finally, Yes to Council Entry Nationalists with apprehension and British officials with hope expected a split in the Congress on Surat lines sooner or later, but Gandhi conciliated the proponents of council entry by acceding to their basic demand of permission to enter the legislatures. He said, "Parliamentary politics cannot lead to freedom but those Congressmen who could not, for some reason, offer satyagraha or devote themselves to, constructive work should not remain unoccupied and could express their patriotic energies through council work provided they are not sucked into constitutionalism or self-serving." Assuring the leftists, Gandhi said that the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement, did not mean bowing down before opportunists or compromising with imperialism

In May 1934, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) met at Patna to set up a Parliamentary Board to fight elections under the aegis of the Congress itself.

Gandhi was aware that he was out of tune with powerful trends in the Congress. A large section of the intelligentsia favoured parliamentary politics with which he was in fundamental disagreement. Another section was estranged, from the Congress because of Gandhi's emphasis on the spinning wheel as the "second lung of the nation". The

#### 186 A Brief History of Modern India

socialists led by Nehru also had differences with Gandhi. In October 1934, Gandhi announced his resignation from the Congress to serve it better in thought, word and deed. Nehru and the socialists thought that the British must first be expelled before the struggle for socialism could be waged, and in an anti-imperialist struggle unity around the Congress, still the only anti-imperialist mass organisation, was indispensable. Thus it was better, they felt, to gradually radicalise the Congress than to get isolated from the masses. The right wing was no less accommodating. In the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly held in November 1934, the Congress captured 45 out of 75 seats reserved for Indians.

#### GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

Amidst the struggle of 1932, the Third RTC was held in November, again without Congress participation. The discussions led to the formulation of the Act of 1935.

#### Main Features

The Government of India Act was passed by the British Parliament in August 1935. Its main provisions were as follows.

##### 1. An All India Federation

It was to comprise all British Indian provinces, all chief commissioner's provinces and Indian states. The federation's formation was conditional on the fulfilment of two conditions:

- (i)-states with allotment of 52 seats in the proposed Council of States should agree to join the federation;
- (ii) aggregate population of states in the above category should be 50 per cent of the total population of all Indian states.

Since these conditions were not fulfilled, the proposed federation never came up. The Central Government carried on upto 1946 as per the provisions of Government of India Act, 1919.

## 2. Federal Level Executive

- Governor-general was the pivot of the entire Constitution.
- Subjects to be administered were divided into reserved and transferred subjects. Reserved subjects—foreign affairs,

## National Movement 1919-1939 187

defence, tribal areas and ecclesiastical affairs—were to be exclusively administered by the governor-general on the advice of executive councillors. Executive councillors were not to be responsible to the Central Legislature: Transferred subjects included all other subjects and were to be administered by the governor-general on the advice of ministers elected by the legislature. These ministers were to be responsible to the federal legislature and were to resign on losing the confidence of the body.

- Governor-general could act in his individual judgement in the discharge of his special responsibilities for the security and tranquillity of India.

## Legislature

The bicameral legislature was to have an upper house (Council of States) and a lower house (Federal Assembly). The Council of States was to be a 260-member house, partly directly elected from British Indian provinces and partly (40 per cent) nominated by the princes. The Federal Assembly was to be a 375-member house, partly indirectly elected from British Indian provinces and partly (one-third) nominated by the princes. Oddly enough, election to the Council of States was direct and that to the Federal Assembly, indirect.

- Council of States was to be a permanent body with one-third members retiring every third year. The duration of the assembly was to be 5 years. The three lists for legislation purposes were to be federal, provincial and concurrent.
- Members of Federal Assembly could move a vote of no-confidence against ministers. Council of States could not move a vote of no-confidence.
- The system of religion-based and class-based electorates was further extended.
- 80 per cent of the budget was non-votable.
- Governor-general had residuary powers. He could
  - (a) restore cuts in grants,
  - (b) certify bills rejected by the legislature,
  - (c) issue ordinances and
  - (d) exercise his veto.

## 188 A Brief History of Modern India

### 3. Provincial Autonomy

- Provincial autonomy replaced dyarchy.
- Provinces were granted autonomy and separate legal identity.
- Provinces were freed from "the superintendence, direction" of the secretary of state and governor-general. Provinces henceforth derived their legal authority directly from the British Crown. Provinces were

given independent financial powers and resources. Provincial governments could borrow money on their own security.

#### Executive

- Governor was to be the Crown's nominee and representative to exercise authority on the king's behalf in a province.
- Governor was to have special powers regarding minorities, rights of civil servants, law and order, British business interests, partially excluded areas, princely states, etc.
- Governor could take over and indefinitely run administration.

#### Legislature

- Separate electorates based on Communal Award were to be made operational.
- All members were to be directly elected. Franchise was extended; women got the right on the same basis as men. Ministers were to administer all provincial subjects in a council of ministers headed by, a premier.
- Ministers were made answerable to and removable by the adverse vote of the legislature.
- Provincial legislature could legislate on subjects in provincial and concurrent lists. 40 per cent of the budget was still not votable.
- Governor could
  - (a) refuse assent to a bill,
  - (b) promulgate ordinances,
  - (c) enact governor's Acts.

#### Evaluation of the Act

Numerous 'safeguards' and 'special responsibilities' of the governor-general worked as brakes in proper functioning of the Act.

#### National Movement 1919-1939 189

The process of constitutional advance in India is determined by the need to attract, Indian colonial rulers to Raj.

- In provinces, the governor still had extensive powers.
- The Act enfranchised 14 per cent of British Indian population.
- The extension of the system of communal electorates and representation of various interests promoted separatist tendencies which culminated in partition of India.
- The Act provided a rigid Constitution with no possibility of internal growth. Right of amendment was reserved with the British Parliament.

#### Views

We framed the Act of 1935 because we thought that was the best way of maintaining British influence in India. Lord Linlithgow, viceroy (1936-43). We are provided with a car, all brakes and no engine. Jawaharlal Nehru.

#### The Long-Term British Strategy

- Suppression could only be a short-term tactic. In the long run, the strategy was to weaken the movement and integrate large segments of the movement into colonial, constitutional and administrative structure.
- Reforms would revive political standing of constitutionalist liberals and Moderates who had lost public support during the Civil Disobedience Movement.



- Repression earlier and reforms now would convince a large section of Congressmen of the ineffectiveness of an extra-legal struggle.
- Once Congressmen tasted power, they would be reluctant to go back to politics of sacrifice.
- Reforms could be used to create dissensions within Congress—right wing to be placated through constitutional concessions and radical leftists to be crushed through police measures.

## 190 A Brief History of Modern India

Provincial autonomy would create powerful provincial leaders who would gradually become autonomous centres of political power. Congress would thus be provincialised and central leadership would get weakened.

### Nationalists' Response

The 1935 Act was condemned by nearly all sections and unanimously rejected by the Congress. The Congress demanded, instead, convening of a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise to frame a Constitution for independent India.

### THE SECOND STAGE DEBATE

In early 1937, elections to provincial assemblies were announced and once again the debate on the future strategy to be adopted began.

Everyone agreed that the 1935 Act was to be opposed root and branch but it was not clear how it was to be done in a period when a mass movement was not yet possible. There was full agreement that the Congress should fight these elections on the basis of a detailed political and economic programme, thus deepening, the anti-imperialist consciousness of the people. But what to do after the elections was not yet clear. If the Congress got majority in a province, was it to agree to form a government?

There were sharp differences over these questions among the nationalists. The two sides of the debate soon got identified with the emerging ideological divide along the left and right lines.

Nehru, Subhash, Congress socialists and communists were opposed to office acceptance and thereby in the working of the 1935 Act because they argued that it would negate the rejection of the Act by the nationalists. It would be like assuming responsibility without power. Also, it would take away the revolutionary character of the movement as constitutional work would sidetrack the main issues of freedom, economic and social justice, and removal of poverty.

As a counter-strategy, the leftists proposed entry into

### National Movement 1919-1939 191

the councils With an aim to create deadlocks, thus making the working of the Act impossible (older Swarajist strategy). And, as a long-term strategy, they advocated an increased reliance on workers and peasants, integration of their class organisations into the Congress, thus

imparting a socialist direction to the Congress and preparing for the resumption of a mass movement.

The proponents of office acceptance argued that they were equally committed to combating the 1935 Act, but work in legislatures was to be only a short-term tactic since option of a mass movement was not available at the time, and mass struggle alone was capable of winning independence. Capture or rejection of office was not a matter of socialism but of strategy. They agreed that there was a danger of being sucked in by wrong tendencies, but the answer was to fight these tendencies and not to abandon offices. The administrative field should not be left open to pro-government reactionary forces. Despite limited powers, provincial ministries could be used to promote constructive work.

#### Gandhi's Position

He opposed office acceptance in the CWC meetings but by the beginning of 1936, he was willing to give a trial to the formation of Congress ministries.

In its sessions at Lucknow in early 1936 and Faizpur in late 1937, the Congress decided to fight elections and postpone the decision on office acceptance to the post-election phase. In February 1937, elections to the provincial assemblies were held.

#### Congress Manifesto for Elections

The Congress manifesto reaffirmed total rejection of the 1935 Act, and promised release of prisoners, removal of disabilities on the basis of gender and caste, radical transformation of the agrarian system, substantial reduction of rent and revenue, scaling down of rural debts, cheap credit and right to form trade unions and to strike.

#### 192 A Brief History of Modern India

Gandhi did not attend a single election meeting.

#### Congress' Performance

The Congress contested 716 out of 1161 seats. It got a majority in all provinces, except in Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Sindh and NWFP, and emerged as the largest party in Bengal, Assam and NWFP. Because of this performance, the prestige of the Congress rose and Nehru reconciled to the dominant strategy of S-T-S.

#### 28 MONTHS OF CONGRESS RULE IN PROVINCES

Congress ministries were formed in Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces, Orissa, United Provinces, Bihar and later in NWFP and Assam also.

#### Gandhi's Advice

Gandhi advised Congressmen to hold these offices lightly and not tightly. The offices were to be seen as 'crowns of thorns' which had been accepted to see if they quickened the pace towards the nationalist goal. Gandhi advised that these offices should be used in a way not expected or intended by the British.

There was great enthusiasm among the people; suppressed mass energy had got released. There was an increase in the prestige of the Congress as it had showed that it could not only lead people but could also use state power for their benefit. But the Congress ministries had some basic limitations: they could not, through their administration, change the basic imperialist character of the system and could not introduce a radical era.

#### Work Under Congress Ministries

##### Civil Liberties

The Congress ministries did much to ease curbs on civil liberties:

- Laws giving emergency powers were repealed.
- Ban on illegal organisations, such as the Hindustan Seva Dal and youth Leagues, and on certain books and journals was lifted.
- Press restrictions were lifted. Newspapers were taken out of black lists.

##### National Movement 1919-1939 193

- Confiscated arms and arms licences were restored.
- Police powers were curbed and CID stopped shadowing politicians.
- Political prisoners, and revolutionaries were released, and deportation and internment orders were revoked.
- In Bombay lands confiscated during the civil disobedience movement were restored.
- Pensions of officials associated with civil disobedience movement were restored.

Gandhi urged Congressmen to prove that the Congress could rule with least assistance from the police and the Army. But there were certain blemishes in the performance of the Congress ministries regarding civil liberties. Yusuf Maheraly, a socialist, was arrested by the Madras Government for inflammatory speeches and later released. S.S. Batliwala, a socialist, was arrested by the Madras Government for seditious speech and given six months' sentence. Then, K.M. Munshi, the Bombay Home Minister, used the CID against communists and leftists.

##### Agrarian Reforms

There were certain basic constraints before the Congress ministries could undertake a complete overhaul of the agrarian structure by completely abolishing zamindari. These constraints were

- (i) The ministries did not have adequate powers.
- (ii) There were inadequate financial resources as a lion's share was appropriated by the Government of India.
- (iii) Strategy of class adjustments was another hurdle since zamindars, etc had to be conciliated and neutralised.
- (iv) There was constraint of time since the logic of Congress politics was confrontation and not cooperation with colonialism.
- (iv) War clouds had started hovering around 1938.
- (v) The reactionary second chamber (Legislative Council) dominated by landlords, moneylenders and capitalists in United Provinces, Bihar, Bombay, Madras and Assam had to be conciliated as its support was necessary for legislations.

(vii) The agrarian structure was too complex and complicated. In spite of these constraints, the Congress ministries managed to legislate a number of laws relating to land reforms, debt relief, forest grazing fee, arrears of rent, land tenures, etc.

But most of these benefits went to statutory and occupancy tenants while sub-tenants did not gain much. Agricultural labourers did not benefit as they had not been mobilised.

#### Attitude Towards Labour

The basic approach was to advance workers' interests while promoting industrial peace. This was sought to be achieved by reducing strikes as far as possible and by advocating compulsory arbitration prior to striking before the established conciliation machinery. Goodwill was sought to be created between labour and capital with mediation of ministries, while at the same time efforts were made to improve workers' condition and secure wage increases for them.

The ministries treated militant trade union protests as law and order problems, and acted as mediators as far as possible. This approach was largely successful but not so in Bombay. Also, leftist critics were not satisfied by this approach. Generally, the ministries took recourse to Section 144 and arrested the leaders.

Nehru was unhappy about these repressive measures, but in public supported the ministries to protect them from petty and petulant criticism. Although Gandhi was against militant and violent methods, he stood for political education of the masses. He felt that the popular base of the Congress should not erode. He appealed to Congressmen against frequent resort to colonial laws and machinery.

#### Social Welfare Reforms

These included the following— Prohibition imposed in certain areas.

- Measures for welfare of Harijans taken—temple entry, use of public facilities, scholarships, an increase in their numbers in government service and police, etc.

#### National Movement 1919–1939 195

- Attention given to primary, technical and higher education and to public health and sanitation.
- Encouragement given to khadi through subsidies and other measures.
- Prison reforms undertaken.
- Encouragement given to indigenous enterprises.
- Efforts taken to develop planning through National Planning Committee set up under Congress President Subhash Bose in 1938.

#### Extra-Parliamentary Mass Activity of Congress

Such activities included—

- launching of mass literacy campaigns,
- setting up of Congress police stations and panchayats,
- Congress Grievance Committees presenting mass petitions to Government, and

- states peoples' movements.

#### Evaluation

Though by 1939 internal strifes, opportunism and hunger for power had started surfacing among Congressmen, yet they were able to utilise council work to their advantage to a great extent. The 28-month Congress rule was also significant for the following reasons. The contention that Indian self-government was necessary for radical social transformation got confirmed. Congressmen demonstrated that a movement could use state power to further its ends without being co-opted.

- The ministries were able to control communal riots.
- The morale of the bureaucracy came down.
- Council work helped neutralise many erstwhile hostile elements (landlords, etc).
- People were able to perceive the shape of things to come if independence was won.
- Administrative work by Indians further weakened the myth that Indians were not fit to rule.

Congress ministries resigned in October 1939 after the outbreak of the Second World War.

#### 196 A Brief History of Modern India

##### Summary

- WHY NATIONALIST UPSURGE AT END OF WAR?

Post-War economic hardship.

Nationalist disillusionment with imperialism worldwide.

Impact of Russian Revolution.

MONTAGU-CHEILMSFORD REFORMS Dyarchy in provinces. Two lists—reserved and transferred—for administration. Reserved subjects to be administered by governor through executive council and transferred subjects to be administered by ministers from legislative council.

Extensive powers to governor, governor-general and secretary of state for interference. Franchise expanded, powers also extended. Governor-general to administer with an executive council of 8—three to be Indians. Two lists for administration—central and provincial. Bicameral central legislature—Central Legislative Assembly as the lower house and Council of States as the upper house.

##### Drawbacks

Dyarchy arrangement too complex and irrational to be functional. Central executive not responsible to legislature.

Limited franchise.

- GANDHI'S ACTIVISM IN SOUTH AFRICA (1893-1914) Set up Natal Indian Congress and started Indian Opinion.

Satyagraha against registration certificates.

Campaign against restrictions on Indian migration.

Campaign against poll tax and invalidation of Indian marriages.

Gandhi's faith in capacity of masses to fight established; he was able to evolve his own style of leadership and politics and techniques of struggle.

- GANDHI'S EARLY ACTIVISM IN INDIA

Champaran Satyagraha (1917)–First Civil Disobedience.

Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)–First Hunger Strike.

Kheda Satyagraha (1918)–First Non-Cooperation.

Rowlett Satyagraha (1918)–First mass-strike.

National Movement 1919–1939 197

#### Summary

- KHILAFAT-NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- Three demands–

1. Favourable treaty for Turkey
2. Redrassal of Punjab wrongs
3. Establishment of swaraj.

#### Techniques used

Boycott of government-run schools, colleges, law courts, municipality and government service, foreign cloth, liquor; setting up of national schools, colleges, panchayats and using khadi; second stage to include civil disobedience by nonpayment of taxes.

Nagpur Congress Session (December 1920)–Congress goal changed to attainment of swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means from attainment of self-government through constitutional means.

Chauri-Chaura Incident (February 5, 1922) Violence by agitated mob–prompted Gandhi to withdraw movement.

- SWARAJISTS AND NO-CHANGERS

Swarajists advocated council entry after withdrawal of NonCooperation Movement with an aim to end or mend the councils. No-changers advocated constructive work during transition period.

- EMERGENCE OF NEW FORCES DURING 1920S

1. Spread of Marxism and socialist ideas
2. Activism of Indian youth
3. Peasants' agitations
4. Growth of trade unionism
5. Caste movements
6. Revolutionary terrorism with a tilt towards socialism.

- ACTIVITIES OF HRA HSRA Established-1924 Kakori robbery-1925

Reorganised-1928 Saunders' murder-1928 Bomb in Central Legislative Assembly-1929 Bid to blow up viceroy's train-1929 Azad killed in police encounter-1931 Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev hanged-1931.

198 A Brief History of Modern India

#### Summary

REVOLUTIONARIES IN BENGAL Attempt on life of Calcutta police commissioner-1924 Surya Sen's Chittagong Revolt Group and Chittagong robberies1930.

#### REASONS FOR GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM

1. Socio-economic backwardness concessions used as a tool to fuel communalism by colonial rulers.
2. British policy of divide and rule.
3. Communalism in history writing.
4. Chauvinist elements of socio-religious reform movements.
5. Side-effects of militant nationalism.
6. Communal reaction by majority community.

SIMON COMMISSION Came in 1928 to explore possibility of further constitutional advance. Boycotted by Indians because no Indian represented in the commission.

NEHRU REPORT (1928) First Indian effort to draft constitutional scheme. Recommended—

- \* dominion status
- \* not separate electorates, but joint electorates with reserved seats for minorities.
- \* linguistic provinces.
- \* 19 fundamental rights.
- \* responsible government at centre and in provinces.

CALCUTTA CONGRESS SESSION (DECEMBER 1928) One year ultimatum to Government to accept dominion status or else civil disobedience to be launched for complete independence.

LAHORE CONGRESS SESSION (DECEMBER 1929) Congress adopted complete independence as its goal. Congress decided to launch a civil disobedience movement. January 26, 1930 celebrated as the first Independence Day all over the country.

DANDI MARCH (MARCH 12-APRIL 6, 1930). Led by Gandhi; resulted in spread of salt satyagraha to Tamil Nadu, Malabar, Andhra, Assam, Bengal.

Spread of the movement

Khudai Khidmatgars active in NWFP.

Textile workers active in Sholapur.

199

#### Summary

Salt satyagraha in Dharsana. No-chowkidara tax campaign in Bihar. Anti-chowkidara and anti-union-board tax in Bengal. No-tax movement in Gujarat. Civil disobedience of forest laws in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Central Provinces. Agitation against "Cunningham Circular" in Assam. No rent campaign in UP. Mass participation of women, students, some sections of Muslims, merchants and petty traders, tribals, workers and peasants.

- FIRST RTC (NOVEMBER 1930-JANUARY 1931) Congress did not attend.
- GANDHI-IRWIN PACT (MARCH 1931) Congress agreed to attend Second RTC and to withdraw CDM.

- KARACHI CONGRESS SESSION (MARCH 1931)    Endorsed Delhi Pact between Gandhi and Irwin.    Passed resolutions on economic programme and fundamental rights.
- SECOND RTC (DECEMBER 1931)    Right wing in Britain against concessions to Indians.    Session got deadlocked on question of safeguards to minorities.    December 1931 - April 1934 Second phase of CDM.
- COMMUNAL AWARD (1932)    Provided separate electorates to depressed classes. Nationalists felt this to be a threat to national unity. Gandhi's fast unto death (September 1932) led to Poona Pact which abandoned separate electorates for depressed classes in favour of increased reserved seats for them.
- GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935    Proposed—an All India Federation; bicameral legislature at the centre; provincial autonomy; three lists for legislation—federal, provincial and concurrent. At centre, subjects to be administered divided into reserved and transferred categories. Provincial legislators to be directly elected. Early 1937—elections to provincial assemblies held. Congress ministries formed in Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and NWFP.

200

## CHAPTER 6

National Movement Towards Freedom and Partition 1939-1947

SECOND WORLD WAR AND NATIONALIST 'RESPONSE

September 1, 1939: Germany attacks Poland, Second World War starts.  
September 3, 1939: Britain declares war against Germany and declares India's support for the war without consulting Indian opinion.  
June 1941: Germany attacks Russia and Russia is dragged into the War.  
December 1941: Japan attacks Pearl Harbour. March 1942: After having overrun almost the whole of SouthEast. Asia, Japan occupies Rangoon.

Congress Position Before War

The Congress' hostility to Fascism, Nazism, militarism and imperialism had been much more consistent than the British record. But the Indian offer to cooperate in the war effort had two basic conditions:

1. After the war, a constituent assembly should be convened to determine political structure of a free India.
2. Immediately, some form of a genuinely responsible government should be established at the centre.

The offer was rejected by Linlithgow, the viceroy. The Congress argued that these conditions were necessary to win public opinion for war.

CWC Meeting at Wardha (September 10-14, 1939): Different opinions were voiced on the question of Indian support to British war efforts—



Gandhi advocated an unconditional support to the Allied powers as he made a clear distinction between the democratic states of Western Europe and the totalitarian Nazis.

Subhash Bose and the socialists argued that the war was an imperialist one since both sides were fighting for gaining or defending colonial territories. Therefore, the question of supporting either of the two sides did not arise. Instead,

National Movement 1939-1947 201

advantage should be taken of the situation to wrest freedom by immediately starting a civil disobedience movement.

Nehru made a sharp distinction between democracy and Fascism. He believed that justice was on the side of Britain, France and Poland, but he was also convinced that Britain and France were imperialist powers, and that the war was the result of the inner contradictions of capitalism maturing since the end of World War I. He, therefore, advocated no Indian participation till India itself was free. However, at the same time, no advantage was to be taken of Britain's difficulty by starting an immediate struggle.

The CWC resolution condemned Fascist aggression. It said that

- (i) India could not be party to a war being fought ostensibly for democratic freedom, while that freedom was being denied to India;
- (ii) if Britain was fighting for democracy and freedom, it should prove it by ending imperialism in its colonies and establishing full democracy in India;
- (iii) the Government should declare its war aims soon and, also, as to how the principles, of democracy were to be applied to India.

The Congress leadership wanted to give every chance to the viceroy and the British Government

#### Government's Response

The Government's response was entirely negative. Linlithgow, in his statement (October 17, 1939), tried to use the Muslim League and the princes against the Congress. The Government

- refused to define British war aims beyond stating that Britain was resisting aggression;
- said it would, as part of future arrangement, consult "representatives of several communities, parties and interests in India, and the Indian princes" as to how the Act of 1935 might be modified;
- said it would immediately set up a "consultative committee" whose advice could be sought whenever required.

Government's Hidden Agenda Linlithgow's statement was not an aberration, but a part of general British policy—

202        A Brief History of Modern India

"to take advantage of the war to regain the lost ground from the Congress" by provoking the Congress into a confrontation with the

Government. and then using the extraordinary situation to acquire draconian powers. Even before the declaration of war, emergency powers had been acquired for the centre in respect of provincial subjects by amending the 1935 Act. Defence of India ordinance had been enforced the day the war was declared, thus restricting civil liberties. In May 1940, a top secret Draft Revolutionary Movement Ordinance had been prepared, aimed at launching crippling pre-emptive strikes on the Congress. The Government could then call upon the Allied troops stationed in India. It could also win an unusual amount of liberal and leftist sympathy all over the world by painting an aggressive Congress as being pro-Japan and pro-Germany.

British Indian reactionary policies received full support from Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Secretary of State, Zetland, who branded the Congress as a purely Hindu organisation.

It became clear that the British Government had no intention of loosening its hold, during or after the war, and was willing to treat the Congress as an enemy. Gandhi readed sharply to the Government's insensitivity to Indian public opinion- "there is to be no democracy for India if Britain can prevent it." Referring to the minorities and other special interests, Gandhi said, "Congress will safeguard minority rights provided they do not advance claims inconsistent with India's independence."

On October 23, 1939, the CWC meeting rejected the viceregal statement as a reiteration of the old imperialist policy, decided not to support the war, and called upon the Congress ministries to resign in the provinces. status of Westminster variety, after the war 411ltezollolLtitisholicy in India."

National Movement 1939-1947 203

Debate on the 'Question of Immediate Mass Satyagraha After Linlithgow's statement of October 1939, the debate on the question of immediate mass struggle began once again. Gandhi and his supporters were not in favour of an immediate struggle because they felt that the

- Allied cause was just; communal, sensitivity and lack of Hindu-Muslim unity could result in communal riots; Congress organisation was in shambles and the atmosphere was not conducive for a mass struggle; and
- masses were not ready for a struggle. They instead advocated toning up the Congress organisation, carrying on political work among the masses, and negotiating till all possibilities of a negotiated settlement were exhausted. Only then would the struggle be begun.

The views of the dominant leadership were reflected in the Congress resolution at the Ramgarh session (March 1940)-"Congress would resort to civil disobedience as soon as the Congress organisation is considered fit enough or if circumstances precipitate a crisis."

A coalition of leftist groups-Subhash Bose and his Forward Bloc, Congress Socialist Party, Communist Party, the Royists-characterised the war as an imperialist war giving an opportunity to attain freedom through an all-out struggle against British imperialism. This group was

convinced that the masses were ready for action, only waiting for a call from the leadership. They accepted hurdles, such as communalism and the shortcomings of the Congress organisation, but thought that these would be automatically swept away in the course of a struggle. They urged the Congress leadership to launch an immediate mass struggle.

Bose even proposed a parallel Congress to organise an immediate mass struggle if the Congress leadership was not willing to go along with them, but the CSP and CPI differed with Bose on this

Nehru considered the Allied powers as imperialists and his philosophy and political perception leant towards the idea

204 A Brief History of Modern India

of an early struggle but that would have undermined the fight against Fascism. He finally went along with Gandhi and the Congress majority.

Pakistan Resolution-Lahore (March 1940)

The Muslim League passed a resolution calling for "grouping of geographically contiguous areas where Muslims are in majority (North-West, East) into independent states in which constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign and adequate safeguards to Muslims where they are in minority".

AUGUST OFFER Hitler's astounding success and the fall of Belgium, Holland and France put England in a conciliatory mood. To get Indian cooperation in the war effort, the viceroy announced the August Offer (August 1940) which proposed:

- dominion status as the objective for India.
- expansion of viceroy's executive council. setting up of a constituent assembly after the war. Indians would decide the constitution according to their social, economic and political conceptions, subject to fulfilment of the obligation of the Government regarding defence, minority rights, treaties with states, all India services.
- no future constitution to be adopted without the consent of minorities.

The Congress rejected the August Offer. Nehru said, "Dominion status concept is dead as a door nail." Gandhi said that the declaration had widened the gulf between the nationalists and the British rulers. The Muslim League welcomed the veto assurance given to the League, and reiterated its position that partition was the only solution to the deadlock.

Evaluation

For the first time, the inherent right of Indians to frame their constitution was recognised and the Congress demand for a constituent assembly was, conceded. Dominion status was explicitly offered.

In July 1941, the viceroy's executive council was enlarged

National Movement 1939-1947 205

to give the Indians a majority of 8 out of 12 for the first time, but the whites remained in charge of defence, finance and home. Also, a National Defence Council was set up with purely advisory functions.

#### INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHAS

The Government had taken the adamant position that no constitutional advance could be made till the Congress came to an agreement with the Muslim leaders. It issued ordinance after ordinance taking away the freedom of speech and that of the press and the right to organise associations. Towards the end of 1940, the Congress once again asked Gandhi to take command. Gandhi now began taking steps which would lead to a mass struggle within his broad strategic perspective. He decided to initiate a limited satyagraha on an individual basis by a few selected individuals in every locality.

The aims of launching individual satyagraha were—

- (i) to show that nationalist patience was not due to weakness;
- (ii) to express people's feeling that they were not interested in the war they made no distinction between Nazism and the double autocracy that ruled India; and
- (iii) to give another opportunity to the Government to accept Congress' demands peacefully.

The demand of the satyagrahi would be the freedom of speech against the war through an anti-war declaration. If the Government did not arrest the satyagrahi, he or she would not only repeat it but move into villages and start a march towards Delhi, thus precipitating a movement which came to be known as the "Delhi Chalo Movement".

Vinoba Bhave was the first to offer the satyagraha and

206 A Brief History of Modern India

National Movement 1939-1947 207

Nehru, the second. By May 1941, 25,000 people had been convicted for individual civil disobedience.

The Congress leaders, released in December 1941, were anxious to defend Indian territory and go to the aid of the Allies. The CWC overrode Gandhi's and Nehru's objections and passed a resolution offering to cooperate with the Government in the defence of India, if

- (i) full independence was given after the war, and
  - (ii) substance of power was transferred immediately.
- It was at this time that Gandhi designated Nehru as his chosen successor.

#### CRIPPS MISSION

In March 1942, a mission headed by Stafford Cripps was sent to India with constitutional proposals to seek Indian support for the war. Stafford Cripps was a left-wing Laborite, the leader of the House of Commons and a member of the British War Cabinet who had actively supported the India national movement.

#### Why Cripps Mission was Sent?

- Because of the reverses suffered by Britain in South-East Asia, the Japanese threat to invade India seemed real now and Indian support became crucial.
- There was pressure on Britain from the Allies (USA, USSR, China) to seek Indian cooperation.
- Indian nationalists had agreed to support the Allied cause if substantial power was transferred immediately and complete independence given after the war.

#### Main Proposals

The main proposals of the mission were as follows.

1. An Indian Union with a dominion status would be set up; it would be free to decide its relations with the Commonwealth and free to participate in the United Nations and other international bodies.
2. After the end of the war, a constituent assembly would be convened to frame a new constitution. Members of this assembly would be partly elected by the provincial assemblies through proportional representation and partly nominated by the princes.
3. The British Government would accept the new constitution subject to two conditions: (i) any province not willing to join the Union could have a separate constitution and form a separate Union, and (ii) the new constitution-making body and the British Government would negotiate a treaty to effect the transfer of power and to safeguard racial and religious minorities.
4. In the meantime, defence of India would remain in British hands and the governor-general's powers would remain intact.

#### Departures from the Past and Implications

The proposals differed from those offered in the past in many respects—

- The making of the constitution was to be solely in Indian hands now (and not "mainly" in Indian hands—as contained in the August Offer). A concrete plan was provided for the constituent assembly.
- Option was available to any province to have a separate constitution—a blueprint for India's partition.
- Free India could withdraw from the Commonwealth.
- Indians were allowed a large share in the administration in the interim period.

#### Why Cripps Mission Failed?

The Cripps Mission proposals failed to satisfy Indian nationalists and turned out to be merely a propaganda device for US and Chinese consumption. Various parties and groups had objections to the proposals on different points—

The Congress objected to

- (i) the offer of dominion status instead of a provision for complete independence.
- (ii) representation of the states by nominees and not by elected representatives.
- (iii) right to provinces to secede as this went against the principle of national unity.

- (iv) absence of any plan for immediate transfer of power and absence of any real share in defence; the governor-general's supremacy had been retained, and the demand for governor-general being only the constitutional head had not been accepted.

Nehru and Maulana Azad were the official negotiators for the Congress.

The Muslim League

- (i) criticised the idea of a single Indian Union.
- (ii) did not like the machinery for the creation of a constituent assembly and the procedure to decide on the accession of provinces to the Union.
- (iv) thought that the proposals denied to the Muslims the right to self-determination and the creation of Pakistan.

Other groups also objected to the provinces' right to secede. The Liberals considered the secession proposals to be against the unity and security of India. The Hindu Mahasabha criticised the basis of the right to secede. The depressed classes thought that partition would leave them at the mercy of the caste Hindus. The Sikhs objected that partition would take away Punjab from them.

The explanation that the proposals were meant not to supersede the August Offer but to clothe general provisions with precision put British intentions in doubt.

The incapacity of Cripps to go beyond the Draft Declaration and the adoption of a rigid "take it or leave it" attitude added to the deadlock. Cripps had earlier talked of "cabinet" and "national government" but later he said that he had only meant an expansion of the executive council.

The procedure of accession was not well-defined. The decision on secession was to be taken by a resolution in the legislature by a 60% majority. If less than 60% of members supported it, the decision was to be taken by a plebiscite of adult males of that province by a simple majority. This scheme weighed against the Hindus in Punjab and Bengal if they wanted accession to the Indian Union.

National Movement- 1939-1947 209

It was not clear as to who would implement and interpret the treaty effecting the transfer of power.

Churchill (the British prime minister), Amery (the secretary of state), Linlithgow (the viceroy) and Ward (the commander-in-chief) consistently torpedoed Cripps' efforts.

Talks broke down on the question of the viceroy's veto. Gandhi described the scheme as "a post-dated cheque"; Nehru pointed out that the "existing structure and autocratic powers would remain and a few of us will become the viceroy's liveried camp followers and look after canteens and the like".

Stafford Cripps returned home leaving behind a frustrated and embittered Indian people, who, though still sympathising with the victims of Fascist aggression, felt that the existing situation in the country had become intolerable and that the time had come for a final assault on imperialism.

#### QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

After Cripps departure, Gandhi framed a resolution calling for British withdrawal and a non-violent non-cooperation movement against any Japanese invasion. The CWC meeting at Wardha (July 14, 1942) accepted the idea of a struggle.

#### Why Start a Struggle Now

The reasons were several:

1. The failure of the Cripps Mission to solve the constitutional deadlock exposed Britain's unchanged attitude on constitutional advance and made it clear that any more silence would be tantamount to accepting the British right to decide the fate of Indians without consulting them.
2. There was popular discontent because of rising prices and shortage of rice, salt, etc. and because of factors such as commandeering of boats in Bengal and Orissa. There were fears of Britain following a scorched earth policy in Assam, Bengal and Orissa against possible Japanese advance.
3. News of reverses suffered by the British in South-East Asia and an imminent British collapse enhanced popular willingness to give expression to discontent. Popular faith in

#### 210 A Brief History of Modern India

the stability of British rule was so low that people were withdrawing deposits from banks and post offices.

4. The manner in which the British evacuated from South-East Asia leaving the subjects to their fate (two roads were provided—Black Road for Indian refugees and White Road exclusively for European refugees), and the rout by an Asian power shattered white prestige and exposed the racist tendencies of the rulers.
5. The leadership wanted to condition the masses for a possible Japanese invasion.

AICC Meeting—Gowalia Tank, Bombay (August 8, 1942) The Quit India Resolution was ratified and the meeting resolved to

- demand an immediate end to British rule in India.
- declare commitment of free India to defend itself against all types of Fascism and imperialism.
- form a provisional Government of India after British withdrawal.
- sanction a civil disobedience movement against British rule.
- Gandhi was named the leader of the struggle.

#### Gandhi's General Instructions to Different Sections

These were spelt out at the Gowalia Tank meeting but not actually issued. They were directed at various sections of society.

- Government servants: Do not resign but declare your allegiance to the Congress.

- Soldiers: Do not leave the Army but do not fire on compatriots.
- Students: If confident, leave studies.
- Peasants: If zamindars are anti-government, pay mutually agreed rent, and if zamindars are pro-government, do not pay rent.
- Princes: Support the masses and accept sovereignty of your people.
- Princely states' people: Support the ruler only if he

National Movement 1939-1947 211

is anti-government and declare yourselves to be a part of the Indian nation.

Gandhi followed up with the now-famous exhortation: "Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is 'Do or Die'. We shall either free India or, die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery."

#### Spread of the Movement

Gandhi had carefully built the tempo through individual civil disobedience movements, organisational revamping and a consistent propaganda campaign. The Government, however, was in no mood to either negotiate with the Congress or wait for the movement to be formally launched. In the early hours of August 9, in a single sweep, all the top leaders, of the Congress were arrested and taken to unknown destinations. Removal of established leaders left the younger and militant elements at their own initiative.

#### Public on Rampage

The general public attacked symbols of authority, hoisting national flags forcibly on public buildings. Satyagrahis offered themselves up to arrest, bridges were blown up, railway tracks were removed and telegraph lines were cut. This kind of activity was most intense in eastern UP and Bihar. Students responded by going on strikes in schools and colleges, participating in processions, writing and distributing illegal news sheets (patrikas) and acting as couriers for underground networks. Workers went on strike in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Jamshedpur, Ahmednagar and Poona.

#### Underground Activity

This was undertaken by the Socialists, Forward Bloc members, Gandhi ashramites, revolutionary terrorists and local organisations in Bombay, Poona, Satara, Baroda and other parts of Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, UP, Bihar and Delhi. Underground activity was carried out by Rammanohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Sharma, Biju Patnaik, Chhotubhai Puranik, Achyut Patwardhan, Sucheta Kripalani and R.P. Goenka. Usha Sharma started an underground radio in

National Movement 1939-1947 213

212 A Brief History of Modern India



Bombay. This phase of underground activity was meant to keep up popular morale by continuing to provide a line of command and guidance to distribute arms and ammunition.

#### Parallel Governments

Parallel governments were established at many places:

Ballia (in August 1942 for a week)—under Chittu Pandey. He got many Congress leaders released.

Tamluk (Midnapore, from December 1942 to September 1944)—which undertook cyclone relief work, sanctioned grants to schools, supplied paddy from the rich to the poor, organised Bidyut Bahinis etc.

Satara (mid-1943 to 1945)—named "Prati Sarkar", was organised under leaders like Y.B. Chavan, Nana Patil, etc. Village libraries and Nyayaclan Mandals were organised, prohibition campaigns were carried on and 'Gandhi marriages' were organised.

Active help was provided by businessmen (through donations, shelter and material help), students (acting as couriers), simple villagers (by refusing information to authority), pilots and train drivers (by delivering bombs and other material) and government officials including police (who passed on secret information to activists).

#### Extent of Mass Participation

The participation was on many levels. Youth, especially the students of schools and colleges, remained in the forefront. Women, especially school and college girls, actively participated, and included Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kripalani and Usha Mehta. Workers went on strikes and faced repression. Peasants of all strata were at the heart of the movement. Even some zamindars participate. We peasants concentrated their offensive on symbols of authority and there was complete absence of anti-zamindar violence. Government officials, especially those belonging to lower levels in police and administration, participated resulting in erosion of government loyalty. Muslims helped by giving shelter to underground Activists. There were no communal clashes during the movement. Communists, despite their anti-war line, felt the irresistible pull of the movement. Princely states showed a low-key response.

#### Government Repression

Although martial law was not applied, the repression was severe. Agitating crowds were lathi-charged, tear-gassed and fired upon. The number of those killed is estimated at 10,000. The press was muzzled. The military took over, many cities; police and secret service reigned supreme. Rebellious villages were fined heavily and in many villages, mass flogging was done.

#### Estimate

- Main storm centres of the movement were eastern UP, Bihar, Midnapore, Maharashtra, Karnataka. Students, workers and peasants were the backbone of the movement while the upper classes and the bureaucracy remained largely loyal. Loyalty to Government suffered considerable erosion. This also showed how deep nationalism had reached.
- The movement established the truth that it was no longer possible to rule India without the wishes of Indians.

- The element of spontaneity was higher than before, although a certain degree of popular initiative had been sanctioned by the leadership itself, subject to limitations of instructions. Also, the Congress had been ideologically, politically and organisationally preparing for the struggle for a long time. The great significance was that the movement placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement. After Quit India, there could be no retreat.
- In this struggle, the common people displayed unparalleled heroism and militancy. The repression they faced was the, most brutal, and the circumstances under which resistance was offered were most adverse.

## 214 A Brief History of Modern India

### National Movement 1939-1947 215

February 1943 Gandhi, started a fast as an answer to an exhortation to the Government to condemn violence; the fast was of the state. The popular response to the news of the fast was immediate and overwhelming. Protests were organised at home and abroad through hartals, demonstrations and strikes. Three members of the viceroy's executive council resigned. The fast achieved the following purposes—

- public morale was raised.
- anti-British feeling was heightened.
- an opportunity was provided for political activity.

Government's high-handedness was exposed. Gandhi got the better of his opponents and refused to oblige by dying. March 23, 1943 Pakistan Day was observed.

### FAMINE OF 1943

The worst-affected areas were south-west Bengal comprising the Tamruk-Contai-Diamond Harbour region, Dacca, Faridpur, Tippera and Noakhali. Around 1.5 to 3 million people perished in this basically man-made famine, the epidemics (malaria, cholera, small pox), malnutrition and starvation. The fundamental causes of the famine were as follows.

1. The need to feed a vast Army diverted foodstuffs.
2. Rice imports from Burma and South-East Asia had been stopped.
3. The famine got aggravated by gross mismanagement and deliberate profiteering; rationing methods were belated and were confined to big cities.

### RAJGOPALACHARI FORMULA

Meanwhile, efforts were on to solve the ongoing constitutional crisis, and some individuals also tried to come up with constitutional proposals.

C. Rajagopalachari, the veteran Congress leader, prepared a formula for Congress-League cooperation. It was a tacit acceptance of the League's demand for Pakistan. Gandhi supported the formula. The main points in CR Plan were:

- Muslim League to endorse Congress demand for independence.
- League to cooperate with Congress in forming a provisional government at centre.
- After the end of the war, the entire population of Muslim majority areas in the North-West and North-East India to decide by a plebiscite, whether or not to form a separate sovereign state.

- In case of acceptance of partition, agreement to be made jointly for safeguarding defence, commerce, communications, etc.

The above terms to be operative only if England transferred full powers to India.

#### Jinnah's Objections

Jinnah wanted the Congress to accept the two-nation theory. He wanted only the Muslims of North-West and North-East to vote in the plebiscite and not the entire population. He also opposed the idea of a common centre. While the Congress was ready to cooperate with the League for the independence of the Indian Union, the League did not care for independence of the Union. It was only interested in a separate nation.

Hindu leaders led by Vir Savarkar condemned the CR Plan.

#### DESAI-LIAQAT PACT

Efforts continued to end the deadlock. Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislative Assembly, met Liaquat Ali Khan, deputy leader of the Muslim League in that Assembly, and both of them came up with the draft proposal for the formation of an interim government at the centre, consisting of—

- an equal number of persons nominated by the Congress and the League in the central legislature.
- 20% reserved seats for minorities. No settlement could be reached between the Congress

#### 216 A Brief History of Modern India

and the League on these lines, but the fact that a sort of parity between the Congress and the League was decided upon, which had far-reaching consequences.

#### AVELL PLAN

Although the war in Europe came to an end in May 1945, the Japanese threat still remained. The Conservative Government in Britain led by Churchill was keen to reach a solution on the constitutional question in India. The viceroy, Lord Wavell was permitted to start negotiations with Indian leaders. Congress leaders were released from jails in June 1945.

#### Why the Government was Keen on a Solution Now

1. The general election in England was scheduled for mid-1945. The Conservatives wanted to be seen as sincere on reaching a solution.
2. There was pressure from the Allies to seek further Indian cooperation in the war.
3. The Government wanted to divert Indian energies into channels more profitable for the British.

#### The Plan

The idea was to reconstruct the governor-general's executive council pending the preparation of a new constitution. For this purpose, a conference was convened by the viceroy, Lord Wavell, at Shimla in June 1945. The main proposals of the Wavell Plan were as follows.

- With the exception of the governor-general and the commander-in-chief, all members of the executive council were to be Indians.

- Caste Hindus and Muslims were to have equal representation.
- The reconstructed council was to function as an interim government within the framework of the 1935 Act (i.e. not responsible to the Central Assembly).
- Governor-general was to exercise his veto on the advice of ministers.
- Representatives of different parties were, to submit a joint list to the viceroy for nominations to the executive

#### National Movement 1939-1947 217

council. If a joint list was not possible, then separate lists were to be submitted.

- Possibilities were to be, kept open for negotiations on a new constitution once the war was finally won.

#### Muslim League's Stand

The League wanted all Muslim members to be League nominees, because it feared that since the aims of other minorities—depressed classes, Sikhs, Christians, etc. were the same as those of the Congress, this arrangement would reduce the League to a one-third minority. (Wavelle wanted Khizr Hyatt Khan as the Muslim representative from Western Punjab.) The League claimed some kind of veto in the council with decisions opposed to Muslims needing a two-thirds majority for approval.

#### Congress Stand

The Congress objected to the plan as "an attempt to reduce the Congress to the status of a purely caste Hindu party and insisted on its right to include members of all communities among its nominees".

#### Wavell's Mistake

Wavell announced a breakdown of talks thus giving the League a virtual veto. This strengthened the League's position, as was evident from the elections in 1945-46, and boosted Jinnah's position; and exposed the real character of the Conservative Government of Churchill.

#### THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

The idea of the Indian National Army (INA) was first conceived in Malaya by Mohan Singh, an Indian officer of the British Indian Army, when he decided not to join the retreating British Army and instead turned to the Japanese for help.

#### The First Phase

The Japanese handed over the Indian prisoners of war (POWs) to Mohan Singh who tried to recruit them into an Indian National Army. After the fall of Singapore, Mohan Singh further got 45,000 POWs into his sphere of influence. By the end of 1942, 40,000 men were ready to join the INA. The INA intended to go into action only on invitation of the Indian National Congress and the people of India. It was also seen by many as a check against the misconduct of

#### 218 A Brief History of Modern India

the Japanese against Indians in South-East Asia and a bulwark against a future Japanese occupation of India.

The outbreak of the Quit India Movement gave a fillip to the INA as well. In September 1942, the first division of the INA was formed with 16,300 men. With the Japanese contemplating an Indian invasion, the idea of an armed wing of INA seemed more relevant to them. But soon, serious differences emerged between the Indian Army officers led by Mohan Singh and the Japanese over the role to be played by the INA. Actually, the Japanese wanted a token force of 2,000 only while Mohan Singh wanted to raise an army of 2,00,000.

#### The Second Phase

The next phase began with the arrival of Subhash Bose in Singapore in July 1943. Earlier, he had left the Congress after having developed differences with Gandhi and had formed the Forward Bloc in 1940: In March 1941, he escaped from India, where he had been under house arrest, and approached the Russian leaders for help against Britain. When in June 1941 the Soviet Union joined the war on behalf of the Allies, Bose went to Germany and from there he reached Japan in February 1943. He asked for Japanese help for an armed struggle against the British rule. He came to Singapore in July 1943 where he was assisted by Rashbehari Bose and others, such as the Indian residents of South-East Asia and the Indian POWs from Burma, Malaya and Singapore. In October 1943, he set up a Provisional Indian Government with headquarters at Rangoon and Singapore. This Provisional Government was recognised by the Axis powers. Recruits were trained and funds collected for the INA. Even a women's regiment called the Rath Jhansi Regiment was formed. In July 1944, Subhash Bose asked for Gandhi's blessings for "India's last war of independence".

One INA battalion commanded by Shah Nawaz was allowed to accompany the Japanese Army to the Indo-Burma front and participate in the Imphal campaign. But the discriminatory treatment by the Japanese, which included being denied rations and arms and being made to do menial work for the Japanese units, completely demoralised the INA units.

#### National movement 1939-1947 219

The failure of the Imphal campaign and the steady Japanese retreat thereafter quashed any hopes of the INA liberating the nation. The retreat continued till mid-1945 and ended only with the final surrender to the British in South-East Asia.

But when the INA POWs were brought back to India after the war to be court-martialled, a powerful movement emerged in their defence.

#### POST-WAR NATIONAL UPSURGE—JUNE 1945 TO FEBRUARY 1946

Two basic strands of national upsurge can be identified during the last two years of British rule—

(i) tortuous negotiations involving the Government, Congress and Muslim League, increasingly accompanied by communal violence and culminating in freedom and the partition.

(ii) sporadic, localised and often extremely militant and united mass action by workers, peasants and states' peoples which took the form of a countrywide strike wave. This kind of activity was occasioned by the INA Release Movement, Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolt, Tebhaga movement, Worli revolt, Punjab Kisan Morchas, Travancore peoples' struggle (especially the Punnapra-Vayalar episode) and the Telangana peasant revolt.

When the Government lifted the ban on the Congress and released the Congress leaders in June 1945, they expected to find a demoralised people. Instead, they found tumultuous crowds impatient to do something. Popular energy resurfaced after three years of repression. People's expectations were heightened, by the release of their leaders. The Wavell Plan backed by the Conservative Government in Britain failed to break the constitutional deadlock.

In July 1945, Labour Party formed the Government in Britain. Clement Attlee took over as the new prime minister and Pethick Lawrence as the new secretary of state.

In August 1945, elections to central and provincial assemblies were announced.

## 220 A Brief History of Modern India

In September 1945, it was announced that a constituent assembly would be convened after the elections and that the Government was working according to the spirit of the Cripps Offer.

### Why a Change in Government's Attitude

1. The end of the War resulted in a change in balance of global power—the UK was no more a power while the USA and USSR emerged as superpowers, both of which favoured freedom for India.
2. The new Labour Government was more sympathetic to Indian demands.
3. Throughout Europe, there was a wave of socialist radical governments.
4. British soldiers were weary and tired and the British economy lay shattered.
5. There was an anti-imperialist wave in South-East Asia—in Vietnam and Indonesia—resisting efforts to replant French and Dutch rule.
6. Officials feared another Congress revolt, a revival of 1942 situation but much more dangerous because of a likely combination of attacks on communications, agrarian revolts, labour trouble, army disaffection joined by government officials and the police in the presence of INA men with some military experience.
7. Elections were inevitable once the war ended since the last elections had been, held in 1934 for the centre and in 1937 for the provinces.

The British would have had to retreat; the Labour Government only quickened the process somewhat.

#### CONGRESS ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND INA TRIALS

Elections were held during the winter of 1945-46. The most significant feature of the election campaign was that it sought to mobilise the Indians against the British; it did not just appeal to the people for votes.

The election campaign expressed, the nationalist sentiments against the state repression of the 1942 Quit India

#### National Movement 1939-1947 221

upsurge. This was done by the glorification of martyrs and condemnation of officials. The brave resistance of the leaderless people was lauded; martyrs' memorials were set up; relief funds were collected for sufferers; the officials responsible for causing pain were condemned; and promises of enquiry and threats of punishment to guilty officials were spelt out.

The Government failed to check such speeches. This had a devastating effect on the morale of the services. The prospect of the return of Congress ministries, especially in those provinces where repression had been most brutal, further heightened these fears. A 'gentleman's agreement' with the Congress seemed necessary to the Government.

Mass pressure against the trial of INA POWs, sometimes described as "an edge of a volcano", brought about a decisive shift in the Government's policy. The British had initially decided to hold public trials of several hundreds of INA prisoners besides dismissing them from service and detaining without trial around 7000 of them. They compounded the folly by holding the first trial in the Red Fort at Delhi in November 1945 and putting on dock together a Hindu, Prem Kumar Sehgal, a Muslim, Shah Nawaz Khan and a Sikh, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon.

Another issue was provided by the use of Indian Army units in a bid to restore French and Dutch colonial rule in Vietnam and Indonesia which enhanced the anti-imperialist feeling among a section of urban population and the Army.

#### Congress Support for INA Prisoners

- At the first postWar Congress session in September 1945 at Bombay, a strong resolution was adopted declaring Congress support for the INA cause.
- Defence of INA prisoners in the court was organised by Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailash Nath Katju, Nehru and Asaf Ali.
- INA Relief and Enquiry Committee distributed small sums of money and food, and helped arrange employment for the affected. Fund collection was organised.

#### 222 A Brief History of Modern India

The INA Agitation—A Landmark on Many Counts The high pitch and intensity at which the campaign for the release of INA prisoners was conducted was unprecedented. The agitation got wide publicity through extensive press coverage with daily editorials, distribution of pamphlets often containing threats of revenge, graffiti conveying similar messages, holding of public meetings and celebrations of INA Day (November 12, 1945) and INA week (November 5-11).

The campaign had a wide geographical reach and witnessed the participation of diverse social groups and political parties. While the nerve centres of the agitation were Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, UP towns and Punjab, the campaign spread to distant places such as Coorg, Baluchistan and Assam. The forms of participation included fund contributions made by many people from film stars, municipal committees, Indians living abroad and gurudwaras to tongawallas; participation in meetings; shopkeepers closing shops; political groups demanding release of prisoners; contributing to INA funds; student meetings and boycott of classes; organising kisan conferences and All India Women's Conference demanding release of INA prisoners.

Those who supported the INA cause in varying degrees, apart from the Congress, included the Muslim League, Communist Party, Unionists, Akalis, Justice Party, Ahrars in Rawalpindi, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh League.

Pro-INA sentiments surfaced in traditional bulwarks of the Raj. Government employees collected funds. The loyalists—the gentlemen with titles—appealed to the Government to abandon trials for good Indian-British relations. Men of the armed forces were unexpectedly sympathetic and attended meetings, received those released (often in uniforms) and contributed funds.

The central theme became the right of Britain to decide a matter concerning Indians. Britain realised the political significance of the INA issue, which with each day assumed more and more of an 'Indian versus British' colour.

National Movement 1939-1947 223

### THREE UPSURGES—WINTER OF 1945-46

The nationalist sentiment which reached a crescendo around the INA trials developed into violent confrontations with the authority in the winter of 1945-46. There were three major upsurges—

1. November 21, 1945—in Calcutta over the INA trials.

2. February 11, 1946—in Calcutta against the seven-year sentence to INA officer Rashid Ali.

3. February 18, 1946—in Bombay, strike by the Royal Indian Navy Ratings. All three upsurges showed a similar three-stage pattern—

I. When a Group Defies Authority and is Repressed

Upsurge 1 (November 21, 1945): A student procession comprising some Forward Bloc sympathisers, Student Federation of India (SFI) activists and Islamia College students who had tied together the League, Congress and red flags as a symbol of anti-imperialist unity marched to Dalhousie Square—the seat of government in Calcutta. These protestors refused to



disperse and were lathicharged. They retaliated by throwing stones and brickbats. The police resorted to firing in which two persons died.

Upsurge 2 (February 11, 1946): The protest was led by Muslim League students in which some Congress and communist students' organisations joined. Some arrests provoked the students to defy Section 144. There were more arrests and the agitating students were lathicharged.

Upsurge 3 (February 18, 1946): 1100 naval Ratings of HMIS Talwar went on a strike to protest against

- \* racial discrimination (demanding equal pay for Indian and white soldiers)
- \* unpalatable food
- \* abuse by superior officers
- \* arrest of a rating for scrawling. 'Quit India' on HMIS Talwar
- \* INA trials
- \* use of Indian troops in Indonesia, demanding their withdrawal.

224 A Brief History of Modern India

National Movement 1939-1947 225

I. The rebellious ratings hoisted the tricolour, crescent and the hammer and sickle flags on the mast of the rebel fleet. Other ratings soon joined and they went around Bombay in lorries holding Congress flags threatening Europeans and policemen. Crowds brought food to the ratings and shopkeepers invited them to take whatever they needed.

II. When the City People Join In This phase was marked by a virulent anti-British mood resulting in the virtual paralysis of Calcutta and Bombay. There were meetings, processions, strikes, hartals, attacks on Europeans, police stations, shops, tram depots, railway stations, banks, and forcible stopping of rail and road traffic by squatting on tracks and barricading of streets.

II. When People in Other Parts of the Country Express Sympathy and Solidarity While the students boycotted classes and organised hartals and processions to express sympathy with other students and the ratings, there were sympathetic strikes in military establishments in Karachi, Madras, Visakhapatnam, Calcutta, Delhi, Cochin, Jamnagar, Andamans, Bahrain and Aden. There were strikes by the Royal Indian Air Force in Bombay, Poona, Calcutta, Jessore and Arnabala. Patel and Jinnah persuaded the ratings to surrender on February 23 with an assurance that national parties would prevent any victimisation.

Evaluation of Potential and Impact of the Three Upsurges

The three upsurges were significant in many ways—

- Fearless action by masses was an expression of militancy in the popular mind.
- Revolt in the armed forces had a great liberating effect on the minds of people.
- RIN revolt was seen as an event marking the end of British rule as finally as the Independence Day.
- These upsurges prompted the British to extend some concessions:

On December 1, 1946, the Government announced that only those INA members accused of murder or brutal treatment of fellow prisoners would be brought to trial.

Imprisonment sentences passed against the first batch were remitted in January 1947.

Indian soldiers were withdrawn from Indo-China and Indonesia by February 1947.

The decision to send a parliamentary delegation to India (November 1946) was taken.

The decision to send Cabinet Mission was taken in January 1946.

But could the communal unity witnessed during these events, if built upon, have offered a way out of the communal deadlock? Or, in other words, what was the potential of these upsurges?

These upsurges were in the nature of direct and violent conflict with authority, which had obvious limitations. Only the more militant sections could participate.

These upsurges were short-lived and were confined to a few urban centres while the general INA agitation reached the remotest villages.

Communal unity witnessed was more organisational than a unity among the people. Muslim ratings went to the League to seek advice and the rest to the Congress and the Socialists.

Despite considerable erosion of the morale of the bureaucracy, the British infrastructure to repress was intact. They were soon able to control the situation. It was a Maratha battalion in Bombay that rounded up the ratings and restored them to their barracks.

#### Congress Strategy

The leftists claim that the Congress indifference to the revolutionary situation arose because of two considerations—that the situation would go out of its control and that disciplined armed forces were vital in a free India. They also claim that if the Congress leaders had not surrendered to power play, a different path to independence would have emerged. But actually these upsurges were an extension of earlier nationalist activity fostered by the Congress

#### 226 A Brief History of Modern India

through its election campaign. advocacy of the INA cause and highlighting of the excesses of 1942.

These upsurges were distinguishable from the earlier activity because of their form of articulation. These were violent challenges to the authority while the earlier activity was a peaceful demonstration of national solidarity.

The Congress did not officially support these upsurges because of their tactics and timing.

Negotiations had been an integral part of the Congress strategy, to be explored before a mass movement could be launched, especially when the British were seen to be preparing to leave soon.

If union at the barricade is honest, there should be a union at the constitutional front also.

Gandhi remarked that the mutiny was badly advised: if they mutinied for India's freedom, they were doubly wrong; if they had any grievances, they should have waited for the guidance of leaders.

#### ELECTION RESULTS

##### Congress' Performance

- It got 91% of non-Muslim votes.
- It captured 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Assembly. • In the provincial elections, it got a majority in most provinces except in Bengal, Sindh and Punjab. The Congress majority provinces included NWFP and Assam which were being claimed for Pakistan.

##### Muslim League's Performance

- It got 86.6% of the Muslim votes.
- It captured the 30 reserved seats in the Central Assembly.
- In the provincial elections, it got a majority in Bengal and Sindh.
- Unlike in 1937, now the League clearly established itself as the dominant party among Muslims.

Punjab, A Unionist-Congress-Akali coalition under Khizr Hyatt Khan assumed power.

#### National Movement 1939-1947 227

##### Significant Feature of Elections

The elections witnessed communal voting in contrast to the strong anti-British unity shown in various upsurges due to

1. separate electorates,
2. limited franchise—for the provinces, less than 10% of the population could vote and for the Central Assembly, less than 1% of the population was eligible.

#### THE CABINET MISSION

The Attlee Government announced in February 1946 the decision to send a high-powered mission of three British Cabinet members (Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India; Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; and A.V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty to India to find out ways and means for a negotiated, peaceful transfer of power to India.

##### Why British Withdrawal Seemed Imminent Now?

1. The success of nationalist forces in the struggle for hegemony was fairly evident by the end of the War. Nationalism had penetrated into hitherto untouched sections and areas.
2. There was a demonstration among the bureaucracy and the loyalist sections, because the paucity of ICS recruits and a policy of Indianisation had ended the British domination of the ICS as early as the First World War and by 1939, there existed British-Indian parity. The long war had caused weariness and economic worries. Now only a depleted, warweary bureaucracy battered by 1942 events remained.

3. The British strategy of conciliation and repression had its limitations and contradictions—  
\* after Cripps' Offer there was little left to offer for conciliation except full freedom;  
\* when non-violent resistance was repressed with force, the naked force behind the Government stood exposed, while if the Government did not clamp down on "sedition" or made offers for truce, it was seen to be unable to wield authority, and its prestige suffered;  
\* efforts to woo the Congress dismayed the loyalists.

National Movement 1939-1947 229

228 A Brief History of Modern India

3. This policy of an unclear mix presented a dilemma for the services, who nevertheless had to implement it. The prospect of Congress ministries coming to power in the provinces further compounded this dilemma.  
4. Constitutionalism or Congress Raj had proved to be a big morale-booster and helped in deeper penetration of patriotic sentiments.  
5. Demands of leniency for INA prisoners from within the Army and the revolt of RIN Ratings had raised fears that the armed forces may not be as reliable if the Congress, started a 1942-type mass movement, this time aided by provincial ministries.  
6. The only alternative to an all-out repression of a mass movement was an entirely official rule which seemed impossible now because the necessary numbers and efficient officials were not available.  
7. The Government realised that a settlement was necessary for burying the ghost of a mass movement and for good future Indo-British relations.

Now the overarching aim of the British policy-makers was a graceful withdrawal, after a settlement on the modalities of the transfer of power and nature of post-imperial India-Britain relations.

On the Eve of Cabinet Mission Plan

The Congress demanded that power be transferred to one centre and that minorities' demands be worked out in a framework ranging from autonomy to Muslim-majority provinces to self-determination or secession from the Indian Union—but, only after the British left.

The British bid for a united and friendly India and an active partner in defence of the Commonwealth, because a divided India would lack in defence and would be a blot on Britain's diplomacy.

The British policy in 1946 clearly deflected this preference for a united India, in sharp contrast to earlier declarations. On March 15, 1946, the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee said: "though mindful of the rights of minorities cannot allow a minority to place their veto on advance of the majority." This was a far cry from the Shimla conference where Wavell had allowed Jinnah to wreck the conference.

Cabinet Mission in India

The mission reached Delhi on March 24, 1946. It had prolonged discussions with Indian leaders of all parties and groups on the issues of—

- (i) interim government,
- (ii) principles and procedures for framing a new Constitution giving freedom to India.

As the Congress and the League could not come to any agreement on the fundamental issue of the unity or partition of India, the mission put forward its own plan for the solution of the constitutional problem in May 1946.

#### Cabinet Mission Plan—Main Points

- Rejection of the demand for a full-fledged Pakistan, because—
  - (i) the Pakistan so formed would include a large non-Muslim population—38% in the North-West and 48% in the North-East;
  - (ii) the very principle of communal self-determination would claim separation of Hindu-majority Western Bengal and Sikh- and Hindu-dominated 'Ambala and Jullundur divisions of Punjab (already some Sikh leaders were demanding a separate state if the country was partitioned);
  - (iii) deep-seated regional ties would be disturbed if Bengal and Punjab were partitioned;
  - (iv) partition would entail economic and administrative problems, for instance, the problem of communication between the western and eastern parts of Pakistan; and
  - (v) the division of armed forces would be dangerous.
- Grouping of existing provincial assemblies into three sections—

Section-A: Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa (Hindu-majority provinces).

Section-B: Punjab, North-West Frontier Province and Sindh (Muslim-majority provinces).

Section-C: Bengal and Assam (Muslim-majority provinces).

#### 230 A Brief History of Modern India

##### National Movement 1939-1947 231

- Three-tier executive and legislature at provincial, section and union levels.
- A constituent assembly to be elected by provincial assemblies by proportional representation (voting in three groups—General, Muslims, Sikhs). This constituent Assembly to be a 389-member body with provincial assemblies sending 292, chief commissioner's provinces sending 4, and princely states sending 93 members. This was a good, democratic method not based on weightage.
- In the constituent assembly, members from groups A, B and C were to sit separately to decide the constitution for provinces and if possible, for the groups also. Then, the whole constituent assembly (all three sections A, B and C combined) would sit together to formulate the Union constitution.
- A common centre would control defence, communication and external affairs. Communal questions in central legislature were to be decided by a simple majority of both communities present and voting.

- Provinces were to have full autonomy and residual powers. Princely states were no longer to be under paramountcy of British Government. They would be free to enter into an arrangement with successor governments or the British Government.
- After the first general elections, a province was to be free to come out of a group and after 10 years, a province was to be free to call for a reconsideration of the group or the Union constitution.
- Meanwhile, an interim government to be formed from the constituent assembly.

Different Interpretations of the Grouping Clause: Each party or group looked at the plan from its own point of view.

Congress: The Cabinet Mission Plan is against Pakistan since grouping is optional; one constituent assembly is envisaged; League's veto is gone.

Muslim League: Pakistan is implied in compulsory grouping. (The Mission later clarified that the grouping was compulsory.)

#### Main Objections

Different parties objected to the plan on different points.

#### Congress

- Provinces should not have to wait till the first general elections to come out of a group. They should have the option of not joining a group in the first place. (Congress had the Congress-ruled provinces of NWFP and Assam in mind which had been included in groups B and C respectively.)
- Compulsory grouping contradicts the oft-repeated insistence on provincial autonomy.
- Absence of provision for elected members from the princely states in the constituent assembly (they could only be nominated by the princes) was not acceptable.

#### League

- Grouping should be compulsory with sections B and C developing into solid entities with a view to future secession into Pakistan. The League had thought that the Congress would reject the plan, thus prompting the Government to invite the League to form the interim government.

#### Acceptance

The Muslim League on June 6 and the Congress on June 24, 1946 accepted the long-term plan put forward by the Cabinet Mission.

#### Wavell's "Breakdown Plan"

Wavell presented this plan to the Cabinet Mission in May 1946 which visualised a middle course between "repression" and "scuttle". This plan envisaged the withdrawal of the British Army and officials to the Muslim provinces of North-West and NorthEast and handing over the rest of the country to the Congress. Though superseded by the Cabinet Mission Plan, Wavell's plan was an evidence of

- British recognition of the impossibility of suppressing any future Congress-led rebellion.

- desire in some high official circles to make a "Northern Ireland" of Pakistan.

## 232 A Brief History of Modern India

July 1946 Elections were held in provincial assemblies for the Constituent Assembly. July 10, 1946 Nehru stated, "We are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided to go into the Constituent Assembly (implying that the Constituent Assembly was sovereign and would decide the rules of procedure). The big probability is that there would be no grouping as NWP and Assam would have objections to joining sections B and C."

July 29, 1946 The League withdrew its acceptance of the long-term plan in response to Nehru's statement and gave a call for "direct action" from August 16 to achieve Pakistan.

### COMMUNAL HOLOCAUST AND THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

From August 16, 1946, the Indian scene was rapidly transformed. There were communal riots on an unprecedented scale, which left around 5000 dead.

the worst-hit areas were Calcutta, Bombay, Noakhali, Bihar and Garhmukteshwar (UP).

### Changed Government Priorities

Wavell was now eager to somehow get the Congress into the Interim Government, even if the League stayed out (a departure from Wavell's stand during the Shimla conference). This attitude was against the League's insistence that all settlements be acceptable to it and against earlier government postures of encouraging communal forces, of denying the legitimacy of nationalism, and of denying the representative nature of Congress.

Thus, continuance of British rule had demanded one stance from Britain, and the withdrawal and post-imperial links dictated a contrary posture.

### Interim Government Sworn In

Fearing mass action by the Congress, a Congress-dominated Interim Government headed by Nehru was sworn in on September 2, 1946 with Nehru still insisting on his party's opposition to the compulsory grouping.

## National Movement 1939-1947 233

Despite the title, the Interim Government was little more than a continuation of the old executive of the viceroy. (Wavell overruled the ministers on the question of the release of INA prisoners in his very last cabinet meeting in March 1947).

Wavell quietly brought the Muslim League into the Interim Government on October 26, 1946. The League was allowed to join

- without giving up the 'direct action, despite its rejection of the Cabinet Mission's long-term and short-term plans,

- despite insistence on compulsory grouping with decisions being taken by a majority vote by a section as a whole (which would reduce the opponents of Pakistan in Assam and NWFP to a position of helpless minority).

#### Obstructionist Approach and Ulterior Motives of League

The League did not attend the Constituent Assembly which had its first meeting on December 9, 1946. Consequently, the Assembly had to confine itself to passing a general "Objectives Resolution" drafted by Nehru stating the ideals of an independent sovereign republic with autonomous units, adequate minority safeguards and social, political and economic democracy.

The League refused to attend informal meetings of the cabinet to take decisions. The League questioned the decisions and appointments made by the Congress members. Liaqat Ali Khan as the finance minister hamstrung the functioning of other ministries.

The League had only sought a foothold in the Government to fight for Pakistan. For them, it was a continuation of the civil war by other means. The Congress demand that the British get the League to change its attitude in the Interim Government or quit had been voiced ever since the League joined the Interim Government.

In February 1947, nine Congress members of the cabinet wrote to the viceroy demanding the resignation of League members and threatening the withdrawal of their own nominees

#### 234 A Brief History of Modern India

##### National Movement 1939-1947 235

. The last straw came with the League demanding the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. A crisis seemed to be developing rapidly.

ATTLEE'S STATEMENT-FEBRUARY 20, 1947 The main points outlined in the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee's statement are given below.

- A deadline of June 30, 1948 was fixed for transfer of power even if the Indian politicians had not agreed by that time on the constitution.
- The British would relinquish power either to some form of central government or in some areas to the existing provincial governments if the Constituent Assembly was not fully representative i.e., if the Muslim majority provinces did not join.
- British powers and obligations vis-a-vis the princely states would lapse with transfer of power, but these would not be transferred to any successor government in British
- Mountbatten would replace Wavell as the viceroy.

The statement contained clear hints of partition and even Balkanisation of the country into numerous states and was, in essence, a reversion of the Cripps Offer.

#### Why a Date Fixed by Government for Withdrawal?

- The Government hoped that a fixed date would shock the parties into an agreement on the main question.



- The Government was keen to avert the developing constitutional crisis.
- The Government hoped to convince the Indians of British sincerity.
- The Government could not deny the truth in Wavell's assessment that an irreversible decline of the Government's authority had taken place.

#### Congress' Stand

The provision of transfer of power to more than one centre was acceptable to Congress because it meant that the existing Assembly could go ahead and frame a Constitution for the areas represented by it, and it offered a way out of the existing deadlock.

But the illusory hopes of a settlement were soon shattered as the statement proved to be a prelude to the final showdown. The League launched a civil disobedience movement to overthrow the coalition government in Punjab, as it felt emboldened by the statement.

#### TOWARDS PARTITION

The communal riots and the unworkability of the CongressLeague coalition compelled many in early 1947 to think in terms of accepting the so far unthinkable partition. The most insistent demand now came from the Hindu and Sikh communal groups in Bengal and Punjab who were alarmed at the prospect of compulsory grouping which might find them in Pakistan. The Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal was assessing the feasibility of a separate Hindu province in West Bengal.

On March 10, 1947, Nehru stated that the Cabinet Mission's was the best solution if carried out; the only real alternative was the partition of Punjab and Bengal.

In April 1947, Congress President Kripalani communicated to the Viceroy—"rather than have a battle, we shall let them have their Pakistan provided you allow Bengal and Punjab to be partitioned in a fair manner."

#### Mountbatten as the Viceroy

Mountbatten proved more decisive and quick in taking decisions than his predecessors because he was informally given more powers, to decide things on the spot, and he had the advantage of a firm decision of the British Government to quit at the earliest. His task was to explore the options of unity and division till October 1947 and then advise the British Government on the form of transfer of power. But he soon discovered that the broad contours of the scenario to emerge were discernible even before he came. The Cabinet Mission Plan was a dead horse and Jinnah was obdurate that he would settle for nothing less than a sovereign state. But a serious attempt at unity would involve supporting those forces which wanted a unified India and countering those who opposed it. Mountbatten preferred to woo both sides.

#### 236 A Brief History of Modern India

##### MOUNTBATTEN PLAN, JUNE 3, 1947

The freedom with partition formula was coming to be widely accepted well before Mountbatten came. One major innovation (actually suggested by V.P. Menon) was the immediate transfer of power on the basis of grant of

dominion status (with 'a right of secession), thus obviating the need to wait for an agreement in the Constituent Assembly on a new political structure.

#### Main Points

The important points of the plan were

- Punjab and Bengal would meet in two, groups Hindus and Muslims, to vote for partition. If a simple majority of either group voted for partition, then these provinces would be partitioned.
- In case of partition, two dominions and two constituent assemblies would be created.
- Sindh would take its own decision.
- Referendum: in NWFP and Sylhet district of Bengal would decide the fate of these areas.
- Since the Congress had conceded a unified India, all their other points would be met
  - (i) independence for princely states ruled out, they would either join India or Pakistan.
  - (ii) independence for Bengal ruled out.
  - (iii) accession of Hyderabad to Pakistan ruled out (Mountbatten supported the Congress on this).
- Freedom would come on August 15, 1947.
- A boundary commission would be set up if partition was to be effected.

Thus, the League's demand was conceded to the 'extent that Pakistan would be created and the Congress' position on unity was taken into account to make Pakistan as small as possible. Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity.

#### Why Congress Accepted Dominion Status?

The Congress was willing to accept dominion status despite its being against the Lahore Congress (1929) spirit because

#### National Movement 1939-1947 237

- (i) it would ensure a peaceful and very quick transfer of power;
- (ii) it was more important for the Congress to assume authority to check the explosive situation; and
- (iii) it would allow for some much needed continuity in bureaucracy and army.

For Britain, the dominion status offered a chance to keep India in the Commonwealth, even if temporarily, considering the economic strength, defence potential and greater value of trade and investment in India.

#### Rationale for an Early Date (August 15, 1947)

Britain wanted to secure Congress' agreement to the dominion status. At the same time the British could escape the responsibility for the communal situation.

The plan was put into effect without the slightest delay. The Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and Punjab decided in favour of partition of these two provinces. Thus, East Bengal and West Punjab joined Pakistan; West Bengal and East Punjab remained with the Indian

Union. The referendum in Sylhet resulted in the incorporation of that district in East Bengal. Two boundary commissions, one in respect of each province, were constituted to demarcate the boundaries of the new provinces. The referendum in NWFP decided in favour of Pakistan, the Provincial Congress refraining from the referendum. Baluchistan and Sindh threw in their lot with Pakistan.

**INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT** On July 18, 1947 the British Parliament ratified the Mountbatten Plan as the "Independence of India Act-1947". The Act was implemented on August 15, 1947.

The Act provided for the creation of two independent dominions of India and Pakistan with effect from August 15, 1947. Each dominion was to have a governor-general to be responsible for effective operation of the Act. The constituent assembly of each new dominion was to exercise the powers of the legislature of that dominion, and the existing Central Legislative Assembly and the Council of States were to be

## 238 A Brief History of Modern India

### National Movement 1939-1947 239

#### Plan Balkan

Between March and May of 1947, Mountbatten decided that the Cabinet Mission Plan had become untenable and formulated an alternative plan. This plan envisaged the transfer of power to separate provinces (or to a confederation, if formed before the transfer), with Punjab and Bengal given the option to vote for partition of their provinces. The various units thus formed along with the princely states (rendered independent by lapse of paramountcy) would have the option of joining India or Pakistan or remaining separate. The plan was quickly abandoned after Nehru reacted violently to it.

automatically dissolved

For the transitional period, i.e., till a new constitution was adopted by each dominion, the governments of the two dominions were to be carried on in accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935.

As per the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, Pakistan became independent on August 14 while India got its freedom on August 15, 1947. M.A. Jinnah became the first Governor-General of Pakistan. India, however, decided to request Lord Mountbatten to continue as the GovernorGeneral of India.

#### PROBLEMS OF EARLY WITHDRAWAL

The breakneck speed of events under Mountbatten caused anomalies in arranging partition details and totally failed to prevent the Punjab massacre, because

- there were no transitional institutional structures within which partition problems could be tackled.
- Mountbatten had hoped to be the common GovernorGeneral of India and Pakistan, thus providing the necessary link, but Jinnah wanted the position for himself in Pakistan.

- there was a delay in announcing the Boundary Commission Award (under Radcliffe); the award was ready by August 12, 1947 but Mountbatten decided to make it public after August 15 only so that the responsibility would not fall on the British.

#### INTEGRATION OF STATES

During 1946-47 there was a new upsurge of State. People's Movement demanding political rights and elective representation in the Constituent Assembly. Nehru presided over the All India State People's Conference sessions in Udaipur (1945) and Gwalior (April 1947). He declared that the states refusing to join the Constituent Assembly would be treated as hostile. In July 1947, Vallabhbhai Patel took charge of the new States' Department. Under Patel, the incorporation of Indian states took place in two phases with a skilful combination of baits and threats of mass pressure in both:

Phase I, By August 15, 1947, all states except Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagarh had signed an Instrument of Accession with the Indian Government, acknowledging central authority over defence, external affairs and communication. The princes agreed to this fairly easily because

- (1) they were "surrendering" only what they never had (these three functions had been a part of the British paramountcy) and
- (2) there was no change in the internal political structure.

Phase II, The second phase involved a much more difficult process of "integration" of states with neighbouring provinces or into new units like the Kathiawar Union, Vindhya and Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan or Himachal Pradesh alongwith internal constitutional changes in states which for some years retained their old boundaries (Hyderabad, Mysore, TravancoreCochin). This phase was accomplished within a year. The principal bait offered was a generous privy purse while some princes were made governors and rajpramukhs in free India.

This rapid political unification of the country after independence was Patel's greatest achievement.

#### WHY CONGRESS ACCEPTED PARTITION?

The Congress was only accepting the inevitable due to the long-term failure to draw Muslim masses into the national movement. The partition reflects the success-failure dichotomy of the Congress-led anti-imperialist movement.

#### 240 A Brief History of Modern India

The Congress had a two fold task—(i) structuring diverse classes, communities, groups and regions into a nation, and (ii) securing independence for this nation. While the Congress succeeded in building up sufficient national consciousness to exert pressure on the British to quit India, it failed in completing the task of welding the nation, especially in integrating the Muslims into the nation.

- Only an immediate transfer of power could forestall the spread of 'direct action' and communal violence. The virtual collapse of the Interim Government also made the notion of Pakistan appear unavoidable.

The partition plan ruled out independence for the princely states which could have been a greater danger to the Indian unity as it would have meant Balkanisation of the country.

- Acceptance of partition was only a final act of the process of step-by-step concessions to the League's championing of a separate Muslim state.

During Cripps Mission (1942), autonomy of Muslim majority provinces was accepted.

During Gandhi-Jinnah talks (1944), Gandhi accepted the right of self-determination of Muslim-majority provinces.

After the Cabinet Mission Plan (1946) Congress conceded the possibility of Muslim majority provinces setting up a separate constituent assembly. Later, the Congress accepted, without demur, that grouping was compulsory (December 1946).

Official reference to Pakistan came in March 1947; CWC resolution stated that Punjab (and by implication, Bengal) must be partitioned if the country was divided.

3rd June Plan: Congress accepted partition. • While loudly asserting the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly, the Congress quietly accepted compulsory grouping and accepted the partition most of all because it could not stop the communal riots.

There was nevertheless much wishful thinking and lack

National Movement 1939-1947 241

of appreciation of the dynamics of communal feeling by the Congress, especially Nehru "Once the British left, Hindu-Muslim differences would be patched up and a free,, united India would be built up."

"Partition is only temporary." – "Partition would be peaceful-once Pakistan was conceded, what was there to fight for?"

The communalism of the 1920s and the 1930s was different from that in the 1940s. Now it was an all-out effort for an assertive "Muslim nation". Congress leadership underestimated the potential of this type of communalism.

Gandhi's Helplessness

Gandhi felt helpless because there had been a communalisation of the people. He accepted partition because the people wanted it. How could there be a movement to fight communalism based on a communalised people? He asked the Congressmen, however, not to accept it in their hearts.

Views

I have not become His Majesty's first Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. Winston Churchill.

The British Cabinet saw the growing rift between the Congress and the Muslim League as their trump card. Both Linlithgow and the Cabinet looked to the rivalry of the Congress and the League as their most useful weapon against the demands of either. B.R. Tomlinson.

Our time in India is limited and our power to control events almost gone. We have only prestige and previous momentum to trade on and these will not last long. Lord Wavell (October 1946).

The offer of Cripps really gave us nothing. If we accepted his offer, we might have cause to rule it in future. In case the British went back on their word, we should not even have the justification for launching a fresh struggle. War had given India

## 242 A Brief History of Modern India

an opportunity for achieving her freedom. We must not lose it by depending upon a mere promise. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

The British were neither the foes of the Hindus nor friends of the Muslims. They set up Pakistan not as a gesture of friendship towards the Muslims, but under the compulsions of their international policies. Wall Khan.

It was not so much that Britain pursued a policy of divide and rule as that the process of devolving power by stages in a politically and socially desperate country was inherently divisive. R.J. Moore.

The truth is that we were tired men, and we were getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again—and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us. We saw the fires burning in the Punjab and heard everyday of the killings. The plan for partition offered a way out and we took it. Jawaharlal Nehru.

I felt that if we did not accept partition, India would be split into many bits and would be completely ruined. My experience of office for one year convinced me that the way we have been proceeding would lead us to disaster. We would not have had one Pakistan but several. We would have had Pakistan cells in every office. Sardar Patel.

Congress, as well as the Muslim League, had accepted partition. The real position was, however, completely different. The acceptance was only in a resolution of the AICC of the Congress and on the register of the Muslim League. The people of India had not accepted partition with free and open minds. Some had accepted it out of sheer anger and resentment and others out of a sense of despair. Maulana Azad.

I alone with the help of my Secretary and my typewriter won Pakistan. for the Muslims. M.A. Jinnah.

## National Movement 1939-1947 243

### Summary

#### CONGRESS STAND ON EVE OF WORLD WAR II:

It would cooperate in war if

- (i) freedom was given after the War.
- (ii) some form of genuinely responsible government was immediately set up.

September 1, 1939: World War-II broke out and Britain declared India's support for war. September 10-14, 1939: At CWC meeting at Vardha: Gandhi was for unconditional support to Britain's war efforts. Subhash Bose and Leftists were, for taking advantage of Britain's difficulties and starting a

mass movement to dislodge colonialism. Nehru recognised the imperialist nature of the war, but was against taking advantage of Britain's difficulties, as well as against Indian participation in war. The CWC resolved—No Indian participation unless freedom is granted; Government should declare its war aims soon. LINLITHGOW'S STATEMENT (OCTOBER 17, 1939) Britain's war aim is to resist aggression. All interest groups are to be consulted to modify 1935 Act for future. Immediately a "consultative committee" is to be formed for advising functions.

#### CONGRESS' RESPONSE

No Indian support to the war Congress ministries in provinces to resign But no immediate mass struggle to be launched. MARCH 1940 "Pakistan Resolution" passed at Lahore session of Muslim League AUGUST OFFER (AUGUST 1940). Dominion status to be the long-term objective After the war. constituent assembly to be formed comprising mainly Indians

### 244 A Brief History of Modern India

#### National Movement 1939-1947 245

##### Summary

Minorities consent to be essential for any future settlement.

Congress rejected the Offer

OCTOBER 1940 Congress launched individual civil disobedience movement; 25000 satyagrahis courted arrest;

MARCH 1942 Japan reached Rangoon after having overrun almost the whole of South-East Asia.

CRIPPS MISSION (MARCH 1942) It offered—

an Indian Union with dominion status, with right to withdraw from Commonwealth.

after war, a constituent assembly elected by provincial assemblies to frame the constitution.

freedom to any province unwilling to join the Union to have a separate agreement with Britain. Meanwhile, defence of India to remain in British hands.

The Congress objected to

- \* dominion status
- \* right of provinces to secede
- \* no immediate transfer of power
- \* retention of governor-general's supremacy.

The Muslim League objected to

- \* Pakistan not being explicitly offered.
- the machinery for creation of Constituent Assembly.

#### QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Why launch a movement now?

Failure of Cripps Offer, an evidence of British lack of will to concede Indian demands.

Public discontent against wartime hardships.

A feeling of imminent British collapse.

Indian leadership's desire to prepare masses for possible Japanese invasion.

AICC Meeting (Bombay–August 8, 1942).

The meeting ratified Quit India Resolution.

August 9, 1942 All prominent leaders arrested.

#### Major Activity

Public on rampage, especially Eastern UP, Bihar, Bengal– attacking symbols of authority.

Underground activity.

to provide a line of command.

Parallel governments in Ballia (UP), Tamluk (Bengal) and Satara (Maharashtra).

Sections participating included youth, women, workers, peasants, government officials, some communists.

February 1943: Gandhi started a fast.

March 23, 1943: Pakistan Day observed.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI FORMULA (MARCH 1944) League should immediately support independence for India and cooperate in Interim Government After War.

Muslim majority areas to exercise right to self-determination In case of partition, common centre for defence, commerce, communications, etc.

Jinnah rejected the offer as he wanted Congress to accept the two-nation theory.

DESAI-LIAQAT PACT Congress and League nominees to have equal representation in Central Executive.

20% of seats reserved for minorities.

#### WAVELL PLAN (SHIMLA CONFERENCE–JUNE 1945)

An all-Indian executive council except the governor-general and commander-in-chief Equal representation for caste Hindus and Muslims.

Muslim League wanted all Muslims to be its nominees and

claimed a communal veto in the executive council. Congress objected to it being painted purely as a caste Hindu party.

#### LAST TWO YEARS OF BRITISH RULE : Two basic strands

1. Tortuous negotiations resulting in freedom and partition, accompanied by communal violence .

2. Sporadic, localised mass action.

July 1945 Labour Government comes to power in Britain.

August 1945 Elections to central and provincial assemblies announced.

#### 246 A Brief History of Modern India

##### Summary

September 1945 Announcement of a Constituent Assembly after War.

A change in Government's attitude due to

Change in global power equations;



UK no longer a power  
Labour Government sympathetic to India;  
Tired British soldiers and shattered British economy;  
Anti-imperialist wave throughout Asia ;  
Officials feared another Congress revolt.

Two Main Election Planks for Congress

1. Repression of 1942
2. Mass pressure against trial of INA POWs.

INA Agitation—Main Features

Had unprecedented, high pitch and intensity.  
Had wide geographical and social spread.  
Penetrated traditional bulwarks of Raj.  
Government employees and loyalists With each day, became a purely India versus Britain, issue    Three Upsurges  
1. November 21, 1945 in Calcutta over INA trials.  
2. February 11, 1946 in Calcutta over seven-year sentence to an INA officer.  
3. February 18, 1946 in Bombay, strike by Royal Indian Navy Ratings.

Congress did not support these upsurges because of their timing and tactics .

Election Results

CONGRESS won 57 out of 102 seats in Central Assembly – got majority in Madras, Bombay, UP, Bihar, Orissa and Central Provinces and coalition partner with Unionists and Akalis in Punjab.

MUSLIM LEAGUE won 30 reserved seats in Central Assembly—got majority in Bengal, Sindh.

Why British Withdrawal Seemed Imminent by 1946

1. Success of nationalist forces in struggle for hegemony.
2. Demoralisation among bureaucracy and the loyalist sections.

National Movement 1939–1947 247

Summary

3. Limitations of British strategy of conciliation and repression.
4. Demands of leniency for INA by army men and RIN ratings' revolt.
5. An entirely official rule was impossible.

Main Aim of Government Policy Now

A graceful withdrawal after settlement on modalities of transfer of power, and post-imperial Indo-British relations.

CABINET MISSION Proposals

Rejection of Pakistan.

Grouping of existing assemblies into three sections A, B, C.

Three-tier executive and legislature at province, princely states and union level Provincial assemblies to elect a constituent assembly.

Common centre for defence, communications, external affairs.

Provinces to have autonomy and residual powers.  
Princely states free to have an arrangement with the successor government or the British Government. In future, a province free to come out of the section or the union. Meanwhile, an interim government to be formed from constituent assembly.

#### Interpretation

Congress claimed that the grouping was optional while the League thought that the grouping was compulsory. Mission decided the matter in the League's favour.

Acceptance League, followed by Congress, accepted Cabinet Mission proposals in June 1946.

Further Developments: July 1946 League withdrew from the Plan after Nehru's press statement, and gave a call for "direct action" from August 16, 1946.

September 1946 An Interim Government headed by Nehru sworn in.

October 1946 League joins Interim Government and follows an obstructionist approach.

February 1947 Congress members demand removal of

#### 248 A Brief History of Modern India

#### Summary

League members; League demands dissolution of Constituent Assembly.

ATTLEE'S STATEMENT (FEBRUARY 20, 1947) June 30, 1948 as deadline for transfer of power.

Power may be transferred to one centre or in some areas to existing provincial governments.

#### MOUNTBATTEN PLAN JUNE 3, 1947

Punjab and Bengal Assemblies to take decision on partition. Sindh to take its own decision. Referendum to be held in NWFP and Sylhet district. Two dominions to be created if partition is to take place, with two Constituent Assemblies.

Freedom to be granted on August 15, 1947

JULY 18, 1947 British Parliament passes the "Indian Independence Act 1947" which is implemented on August 15, 1947.

## CHAPTER 7

### Administrative Changes

#### After 1857

The British were quick to learn from their experience of 1857—an organised mass action could pose a serious challenge to the existence of British rule in India. The ruler subject gap was sought to be narrowed so as to reduce, if not eliminate altogether, the alienation of the masses

from the administration. Also, association of natives in administration could give the rulers an opportunity to have a better idea of the customs, traditions and values of the people they were supposed to rule. This could help them handle more tactfully an 1857-like situation.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw further spread and intensification of the industrial revolution. The emergence of new industrial powers—the USA, Japan and European countries—and a cut-throat competition for colonies and sub-colonies for raw materials, markets for manufactured goods and capital investment were the highlights of this new phenomenon. The British supremacy in the world in finance and manufactured goods trade came to an end. At this point, there were large-scale British capital investments in railways and loans to the Government of India, and to a smaller extent in tea plantations, coal-mining, jute mills, shipping, trade and banking.

All these factors combined to inaugurate a new stage of colonialism in India. The prime concern of the colonial authority in India was to consolidate its position here to secure British economic and commercial interests against political dangers and to extend its sphere to other parts of the world, wherever and whenever possible. There was a renewed upsurge of imperial control and imperialist ideology which

249

## 250 A Brief History of Modern India

### Administrative Changes After 1857 251

was reflected in the reactionary policies during the vice-royalties of Lytton, Dufferin, Lansdowne, Elgin and, above all, Curzon. The changes in the governmental structure and policies in India were to shape the destiny of modern India in many ways.

#### ADMINISTRATION: CENTRAL, PROVINCIAL, LOCAL

**Central Government** The Act for Better 1858 transferred the power to govern from the East India Company to the British Crown. The Company's limitations in administering the country in complex situations had been exposed by the revolt of 1857; besides, there was not much accountability. Now, the power to govern was to be wielded through a secretary of state (earlier this power was exercised by directors of the Company and the Board of Control). The secretary of state was to be a member of the British cabinet, and was to be assisted by a council of 15. He was answerable to the British Parliament. All initiatives and final decisions rested with the secretary and the council was only advisory in nature. (Thus the dual system introduced by Pitt's India Act; 1784 came to an end.) Also, the ultimate power over India remained with Parliament.

The Government in India was to be carried on, as before, by the governor-general whose prestige, if not authority, increased with the new title of viceroy given to him. The viceroy was to be assisted by an executive council whose members were to act as the heads of various departments, as well as viceroy's official advisors.

The concentration of the main authority in the hands of the secretary of state based in London, on the one hand, gradually reduced the viceroy to a subordinate status and further'urther alienated the Indian public opinion from the government.

policy-making. On the other hand, it had the effect of increasing the influence of British industrialists, merchants and bankers over government policy in India. This made the Indian administration even more reactionary than it had been before 1858.

By the Indian Councils Act, 1861, a fifth member, who was to be a jurist was added to viceroy's executive council. For legislative purposes, the viceroy could add six to twelve additional members, of whom at least half had to be nonofficials who could be either Indian or English. The legislative council so constituted possessed no real powers and was merely advisory in nature. Its weaknesses were as follows—

- It could not discuss important matters, and no financial matters at all without previous approval of the Government.
- It had no control over the budget.
- It could not discuss executive action.
- Final passing of the bill needed the viceroy's approval.
- Even if approved by the viceroy, the secretary of state could disallow a legislation.
- Indians associated as non-officials were members of elite sections only—princes, landlords, diwans, etc.—and were not representative of the Indian opinion.
- The viceroy could issue ordinances (of 6 months validity) in case of emergency.

The only important function of the legislative council was to endorse official measures and give theretl the appearance of having been passed by a legislative body. The British Government in India remained, as before, an alien despotism.

**Provincial Government** The Indian Councils Act 1861 returned the legislative powers to provinces of Madras and Bombay which had been taken away in 1833. Later, legislative councils were established in other provinces. The three presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta enjoyed more rights and powers compared to other provinces. The presidencies were administered by a governor and his executive council of three who were appointed by the Crown, while other provinces were administered by lieutenant governors and chief commissioners appointed by the governorgeneral.

In the following decades, some steps towards financial decentralisation were taken, but these were more in the nature of administrative reorganisation aimed at increasing revenues

252 A Brief History of Modern India

Administrative Changes After 1857 253

and reducing expenditure and these did not in any way indicate progress towards provincial autonomy.

The granting of fixed sums out of central revenues for administration of certain services like police, jails, education, medical services and roads to provincial governments signified the first step in the direction towards bifurcating central and provincial finances in 1870 by Lord Mayo. Now; the provincial governments were asked to administer these services as they liked.

Certain other heads of expenditure like land revenue, excise, general administration and law and justice were transferred to provinces in 1877 by Lord Lytton. Besides this, a provincial government was to receive a fixed share of the income realised within that province from sources like stamps, excise and income tax.

In 1882, all sources of revenue were divided into three groups—general (going entirely to centre), provincial (going entirely to the provinces) and those to be divided between the centre and the provinces.

Nevertheless, the central government remained supreme and retained detailed control over provinces. This was inevitable since both the central and provincial governments were completely subordinated to the secretary of state and the British Government.

#### Local Bodies

It was decided to decentralise administration by promoting local government through municipalities and district boards which would administer local services like education, health, sanitation, water supply, roads and other basic amenities financed through local taxes. There were many factors which made it necessary for the British Government in India to work towards establishing local bodies.

Firstly, financial difficulties faced by the Government due to overcentralisation made decentralisation imperative. Secondly, it became necessary that modern advances in civic amenities in Europe be transplanted in India, considering India's increasing economic contacts with Europe. Thirdly, the rising tide of nationalism had improvement in basic facilities as a point on its agenda. Fourthly, a section of British policy makers saw association of Indians with the administration in some form or the other, without undermining the British supremacy in India, as an instrument to check the increasing politicisation of Indians. Fifthly, the utilisation of, local taxes for local welfare could be used to counter any public criticism of British reluctance to draw upon an already overburdened treasury or to tax the rich upper classes.

The important stages in the evolution of local government can be identified as follows.

Between 1864 and 1868 Local bodies were first formed in this period but in most cases consisted of nominated members and were headed by district magistrates. Thus, these were seen not more than as instruments of additional tax collection.

#### Mayo's Resolution of 1870

Financial decentralisation was a legislative devolution inaugurated by the Indian Councils Act of 1861. part from the annual grant from

imperial Government, the provincial governments were authorised to resort to local taxation to balance their budgets. This was done in context of transfer of certain departments of administration, such as medical services, education and roads, to the control of provincial governments. This was the beginning of local finance. Mayo's Resolution emphasised, "Local interest, supervision and care are necessary for success in the management of the funds devoted to education, sanitation, medical relief and local public works."

The various provincial governments such as in Bengal, Madras, North-Western Province, Punjab, passed municipal acts to implement the policy outlined.

Ripon's Resolution of 1882

The Government of Ripon desired the provincial governments to apply in case of local bodies the same principle of financial decentralisation which Lord Mayo's Government had begun towards them. The main points of the resolution were as follows.

- Development of local bodies advocated to improve the

254 A Brief History of Modern India

administration and as an instrument of political and popular education; Policy of administering local affairs through urban and rural local bodies charged with definite duties and entrusted with suitable sources of revenues;

- Non-officials to be in majority in these bodies, who could be elected if the officials thought that it was possible to introduce elections;
- Non-officials to act as chairpersons to these bodies;
- Official interference to be reduced to the minimum and to be exercised to revise and check the acts of local bodies, but not to dictate policies;
- Official executive sanction required in certain cases, such as raising of loans, alienation of municipal property, imposition of new taxes, undertaking works costing more than a prescribed sum, framing rules and bye-laws, etc.

In pursuance of this resolution many Acts were passed between 1883 and 1885 which greatly altered the constitution, powers and functions of municipal bodies in India. But, an era of effective local self-governing bodies was still a dream unfulfilled. The existing local bodies had various drawbacks.

- The elected members were in a minority in all district boards and in many of the municipalities;
- The franchise was very limited;
- District boards continued to be headed by district officials, though non-officials gradually came to head the municipalities;
- The Government retained strict control, and it could suspend or supersede these bodies at will.

The bureaucracy, in fact, did not share the liberal views of the viceroy and thought that the Indians were unfit for selfgovernment. The closing decades of the 19th century were a period of imperialism, and the high priest of that creed, Lord Curzon, actually took steps to increase official control over local bodies.

Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1908)

Pointing out the lack of financial resources as the great stumbling block

Administrative Changes After 1857 255

in the effective functioning of local bodies, the commission made the following recommendations.

(i) It emphasised that village panchayats should be entrusted with more powers like judicial jurisdiction in petty cases, incurring expenditure on minor village works, village schools, small fuel and fodder reserves, etc. The panchayats should be given adequate sources of income.

(ii) It emphasised the importance of sub-district boards to be established in every taluka or tehsil, with separate spheres of duties and separate sources of revenue for sub-district boards and the district boards.

(iii) It urged the withdrawal of existing restrictions on their powers of taxation, and also, the stoppage of regular grants-in-aid from provincial governments except for undertaking large projects.

(iv) The municipalities might undertake the responsibility for primary education and, if willing, for middle vernacular schools, otherwise the Government should relieve them of any charges in regard to secondary education, hospitals, relief, police, veterinary works, etc.

The Government of India Resolution of 1915 contained the official views on the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission, but most of the recommendations remained on paper and the condition of local bodies continued to be as it was left by Lord Ripon.

The Resolution of May 1918

This resolution reviewed the entire question of local self-government in the light of the announcement of August 20, 1917, which had declared that the future direction of constitutional advance was towards grant of responsible government to the people of India and the first step towards the progressive realisation of that ideal was to be in the sphere of local self-government.

The resolution suggested that the local bodies be made as representative as possible of the people with real and not nominal authority vested in them.

Under Dyarchy Local self-government was made a 'transferred' subject under popular ministerial control by

256 A Brief History of Modern India

Government of India Act, 1919, and each province was allowed to develop local self-institutions according to provincial needs and requirements. But, since finance was a 'reserved' subject under the charge of an executive councillor, the Indian ministers could not do much work in the sphere of local selfgovernment for lack of funds.

The Simon Commission (May. 1930) pointed out the lack of progress of village panchayats except in UP, Bengal and Madras. The commission

suggested the retrograde step of increasing provincial control over local bodies for the sake of efficiency. The commission also adversely commented on reluctance of elected members to impose local taxes and observed that, generally speaking, the management of finances of local bodies had deteriorated since the introduction of the reforms of 1919.

The Government of India Act, 1935 and After The provincial autonomy ushered in by the Government of India Act, 1935 gave further impetus to the development of local self-governing institutions in India. Portfolio finance being under the control of popular ministries, now the funds could be made available for development of local bodies. Further, the demarcation of taxation between provincial and local finance which prevailed since the reforms of 1919 was scrapped. New Acts were passed in the provinces giving more authority to local bodies.

However, financial resources and power of taxation of local institutions remained more or less at the same level as in the days of Ripon. Rather, after 1935, certain new restrictions were placed on powers of local bodies to levy or enhance terminal taxes on trades, callings and professions and municipal property. The provincial governments seemed to have ignored the liberal policy of granting wide powers of taxation to local institutions as recommended by the Decentralisation Commission.

The Constitution of free India directs the state governments to organise village panchayats as effective organs of local self-government (Article 40). The Seventy-third and

Administrative Changes After 1857 257

Seventy-fourth Amendments are aimed at plugging the

loopholes in the structure of local self-governing institutions in rural and urban areas.

CHANGES IN THE ARMY After 1857

There was a systematic reorganisation of the Army since, as Dufferin warned in December 1888, "the British should always remember the lessons which were learnt with such terrible experience 30 years ago."

To prevent the recurrence of another revolt was the main reason behind this reorganisation. Also, the Indian Army was to be used to defend the Indian territory of the empire from other imperialist powers in the region—Russia, Germany, France, etc. The Indian branch of the army was to be used for expansion in Asia and Africa, while the British section was to be used as an army of occupation—the ultimate guarantee of British hold over India.

To begin with, domination of the European branch over the Indian branches was ensured. The commissions of 1859 and 1879 insisted on the principle of a one-third white army (as against 14% before 1857). Finally, the proportion of Europeans to Indians was carefully fixed at one to two in the Bengal Army and two to five in the Madras and Bombay Armies. Strict European monopoly over key geographical locations and departments, such as artillery, tanks and armed corps, was guaranteed.



Even the rifles given to Indians were of an inferior till 1900, and Indians were not allowed in these high departments till the Second World War. No Indians were allowed in the officer rank, and, the highest rank an Indian could reach till 1914 was that of a subedar (only from 1918 onwards were Indians allowed in the commissioned ranks). As late as 1926, the Indian Sandhurst Committee was visualising a 50% Indianised officer cadre for 1952.

The India branch was reorganised on basis of the policy of balance and counterpoise or divide and rule. The 1879 Army Commission had emphasised—"Next to the grand counterpoise of a sufficient European force comes the counterpoise of

## 258 A Brief History of Modern India

### Administrative Changes After 1857 259

natives against natives." An ideology of 'martial races' and 'non-martial races', which assumed that good soldiers could come only from some specific communities, developed particularly from the late 1880s, under Lord Roberts, the commander-in-chief from 1887 to 1892. It was used to justify a discriminatory recruitment policy directed towards Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans who had assisted in the suppression of the revolt and were relatively marginal social groups—therefore less likely to be affected by nationalism. The soldiers from Awadh, Bihar, Central India and South India who had participated in the revolt were declared to be non-martial. Moreover, caste and communal companies were introduced in all the regiments and Indian regiments were made a mixture of various socio-ethnic groups so as to balance each other. Communal, caste, tribal and regional consciousness was encouraged to check the growth of nationalist feelings among soldiers. Charles Wood, the secretary of state for India, said, "I wish to have a different and rival spirit in different regiments, so that Sikh might fire into Hindu, Gorkha into either, without any scruple in case of need." Finally, conscious efforts were made to isolate the soldiers from life and thoughts of rest of the population through measures such as preventing newspapers, journals and nationalist publications from reaching them.

On the whole, the British Indian Army remained a costly military machine.

### PUBLIC SERVICES

Just as their systematic exclusion from law and policy-making bodies, the Indians were mostly kept out of the institutions responsible for policy implementation such as the Indian bureaucracy and other like spheres of administration. European supremacy was assured in the civil service also. This was done in mainly two ways.

Firstly, although Indians had 'started' making it to the coveted ranks of the Indian Civil Services ever since Satyendranath Tagore became the first Indian to do so in 1863. entering the civil services was still extremely difficult for the Indians. The entrance examination for ICS was held in London in English medium only, and the subjects included classical Greek and Latin learning. Moreover, the maximum age for appearing at the examination was reduced from twenty-three in 1859 to

nineteen in 1878 under Lytton. Secondly, all key positions of power and authority and those which were wellpaid were occupied by the Europeans.

Despite slow Indianisation after 1918 under nationalist pressure, key positions continued to be occupied by Europeans. But gradually, the Indians came to realise that Indianisation of civil service had not, in any way, transferred effective power to Indian hands. The Indian members of the civil service continued to serve imperialist interests of their British masters. (Also refer to chapter on "Development of Civil Service under the British".)

#### PRINCELY STATES

Relations with princely states were to be guided by a twopoint policy—using and perpetuating them as bulwark of the, empire and subordinating them completely to British authority (the policy of subordinate union).

To cultivate these states as a buffer against future political unrest and to reward them for their loyalty during the revolt of 1857, the policy of annexation was abandoned. The new policy was to depose or punish but not annex. Also, territorial integrity of states was guaranteed and it was announced that their right to adopt an heir would be respected.

The subordination of princely states to British authority was completed when the fiction of Indian states standing in a status of equality with the Crown as independent, sovereign states ended with the Queen adopting the title of Kaiseri-i-Hind (Queen Empress of India) in 1876, to emphasise British sovereignty over entire India. It was later made clear by Lord Curzon that the princes ruled their states merely as agents of the British Crown. With paramountcy, the British

#### 260 A Brief History of Modern India

Government exercised the right to interfere in the internal affairs of states through their residents or by appointing and dismissing ministers and officials.

The British were helped further in their encroachment by modern developments in communication—railways, roads, telegraph, canals, post offices, etc. The motive for interference was also provided by the rise of nationalist, democratic sentiments in these states, the suppression of which, the British realised, was essential for their survival. As a positive side to these modern political movements, the British helped these states adopt modern administrative institutions. (Also refer to chapter on "Indian States under. British Rule".)

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES Contrary to their pre-1857 intentions of trying to modernise India on progressive lines, now the administration adopted blatantly reactionary policies on the pretext that Indians were not fit for self-governance and needed British presence in their

#### Divide and Rule

Determined to avoid a united mass action challenging their authority, the British rulers in India decided to practice a naked policy of divide

and rule, by putting princes against states' people, region against region, province against province, caste against caste and Hindus against Muslims.

After an immediate spell of repression against Muslims, following the 1857 revolt, the authorities decided, after 1870, to use the middle and upper educated classes among Muslims against the rising tide of nationalism, using conflicts over scarce resources in education, administrative jobs and later political spoils (which were inherent in the very logic of colonial underdevelopment) as a tool to create a split along religious lines among educated Indians.

#### Hostility to Educated Indians

The emerging middle class nationalist leadership was analysing the exploitative, colonial character of British rule and demanding Indian participation in administration. At a time when the nationalist movement

#### Administrative Changes After 1857 261

was born (Indian National Congress was founded in 1885), the British interpreted the moves as a challenge to their authority and adopted a hostile attitude to such leadership. In fact, from then onwards, they opposed all those who stood for modern education.

#### Attitude towards the Zamindars

In their pursuit of reactionary policies and hope to expand their social base, the British looked for alliances with the most reactionary of social groups—the princes, zamindars, etc. The British intended to use them as a counterweight against nationalist-minded intelligentsia. Now, the zamindars and landlords were hailed as the 'natural' and 'traditional' leaders of people. Lands of most of the Awadh taluqclars confiscated prior to 1857 were restored to them. The interests and privileges of zamindars and landlords were protected in opposition to those of the peasants; the former in turn saw the British as guarantors of their very existence and became their firm supporters.

#### Attitude towards Social Reforms

Having decided to side with the reactionary elements of Indian society, the British withdrew support to social reforms, which they felt had aroused the wrath of orthodox sections against them. Also, by encouraging caste and communal consciousness, the British helped the reactionary forces.

#### Underdeveloped Social Services

A disproportionately large expenditure on army and civil administration and the cost of wars left little to be spent on social services like education, health, sanitation, physical infrastructure, etc. a legacy which still haunts this country. And whatever facilities were established catered to the elite sections and urban areas.

#### Labour Legislations

As in the early stages of industrial revolution in Europe, the working conditions in factories and plantations in nineteenth-century India were miserable. Working hours were long—for women and children as well as for

men—and wages were low. In overcrowded, poorly ventilated and poorly lighted working places, the safety measures were practically non-existent.

262                    A Brief History of Modern India

Ironically, the first-ever demand for regulation of the condition of workers in factories in India came from the Lancashire textile capitalist lobby. Apprehending the emergence of a competitive rival in the Indian textile industry under conditions of cheap and unregulated labour, they demanded the appointment of a commission for investigation into factory conditions. The first commission was appointed in 1875 although the first Factory Act was not passed before 1881.

The Indian Factory Act, 1881 dealt primarily with the problem of child labour (between 7 and 12 years of age). Its significant provisions were:

- \* employment of children under 7 years of age prohibited,
- \* working hours restricted to 9 hours per day for children,
- \* children to get four holidays in a month,
- \* hazardous machinery to be properly fenced off.

The Indian Factory Act, 1891

- \* increased the minimum age (from 7 to 9 years) and the maximum (from 12 to 14 years) for children,
- \* reduced maximum working hours for children to 7 hours a day,
- \* fixed maximum working hours for women at 11 hours per day with an one-and-a-half hour interval (working hours for men were left unregulated),
- \* provided weekly holiday for all.

But these laws did not apply to British-owned tea and coffee plantations where the labour was exploited ruthlessly and treated like slaves. The Government helped these planters by passing laws such as those which made it virtually impossible for a labourer to refuse to work once a contract was entered into. A breach of contract was a criminal offence, with a planter having the right to get the defaulting labourer arrested.

More labour laws were passed under nationalist pressures in the twentieth century but the overall working conditions remained deplorable as ever.

Restrictions on Freedom of the Press

The nationalists had been quick to use new advancements in press technology

Administrative Changes After 1857 263

to educate public opinion and influence government policies through criticism and censure and later to arouse national consciousness.

In 1835, Metcalfe had lifted restrictions imposed on the Indian press. But Lytton, fearing an increased influence of the nationalist press on public opinion, imposed restrictions on Indian language press through the infamous Vernacular Press Act, 1878. This Act had to be repealed under public protest in 1882. After that, the press enjoyed relative

freedom for about two decades, but was under repression again in the wake of swadeshi and anti-partition movement as restrictions were imposed in 1908 and 1910. (Also refer to chapter on "Development of Press in India".)

#### White Racism

The notion of white superiority was maintained very carefully by the colonial rulers by systematically excluding the Indians from higher grades of services—both civil and military—from railway compartments, parks, hotels, clubs, etc., and by public display of racial arrogance through beatings, blows and even murders (reported as accidents). As Elgin once wrote, "We could only govern by maintaining the fact that we were the dominant race—though Indians in services should be encouraged, there is a point at which we must reserve the control to ourselves, if we are to remain at all."

#### FOREIGN POLICY

The pursuance of a foreign policy, guided by interest of British imperialism, often led to India's conflicts with neighbouring countries. These conflicts arose due to various reasons. Firstly, political and administrative consolidation of the country coupled with the introduction of modern means of communication impelled the Government of India to reach out for natural, geographical frontier for internal cohesion and defence which sometimes resulted in border clashes. Secondly, the British Government had as its major aims in Asia and Africa

- (i) protection of the invaluable Indian empire;
- (ii) expansion of British commercial and economic interests;

#### 264 A Brief History of Modern India

(iii) keeping other European imperialist powers, whose colonial interests came in conflict with those of the British, at an arm's length in Asia and Africa.

These aims led to British expansion and territorial conquests outside India's natural frontiers, and to conflicts with other imperialist European powers such as Russia and France.

While the interests served were British, the money spent and the blood shed was Indian. A general survey of India's relations with its neighbours is as follows.

Bhutan, The occupation of Assam in 1816 brought the British into close contacts with the mountain state of Bhutan. Frequent raids by the Bhutanese into adjoining territories in Assam and Bengal, bad treatment meted out to Elgin's envoy in 1863-64 and the treaty imposed on him, by which the British were forced to surrender the passes leading to Assam, led to British annexation of these passes and the stopping of allowance paid to the Bhutanese. In 1865 the Bhutanese were forced to surrender the passes in return for an annual subsidy. It was the surrendered district which became a productive area with tea gardens.

Nepal, The British desire to reach out to natural geographical frontiers brought them into conflict first of all with the northern hill kingdom of Nepal. In 1814, a border clash resulted in a full-fledged war which ended with a treaty in favour of the British. As per the treaty,

- \* Nepal accepted a British resident,
- \* Nepal ceded the districts of Garhwal and Kumaon, and abandoned claims to Terai,
- \* Nepal also withdrew from Sikkim.

This agreement brought many advantages to the British

- \* the British empire now reached the Himalayas;
- \* it got better facilities for trade with Central Asia;
- \* it acquired sites for hill stations, such as Shimla, Mussoorie and Nainital;
- \* the Gorkhas joined the British Indian Army in large numbers.

#### Administrative Changes After 1857 265

Burma The expansionist urges of the British, fuelled by the lure of, forest resources, market for British manufactures and the need to check French ambitions in Burma and rest of South-East Asia, finally resulted in the annexation of Burma after three wars.

The First Burma War (1824-26) was fought when the Burmese expansion westwards and occupation of Arakan and Manipur, and the threat to Assam and Brahmaputra Valley led to continuous friction along the ill-defined border between Bengal and Burma, in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. The British expeditionary forces occupied Rangoon in May 1824 and reached within 72 km of the capital at Ava. Peace was established in 1826 with the Treaty of Yandabo which provided that the Government of Burma

- \* pay one crore rupees as war compensation,
- \* cede its coastal provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim,
- \* abandon claims on Assam, Cachhar and Jaintia,
- \* recognise Manipur as an independent state,
- \* negotiate a commercial treaty with Britain,
- \* accept a British resident at Ava, while posting a Burmese envoy at Calcutta.

These terms allowed the British to acquire most of Burma's coastline and also a firm base in Burma for future expansion.

Second Burma war was the result of almost wholly commercial greed. The British merchants were keen to get hold of timber resources of upper Burma and also sought further inroads into the Burmese market. This time, the British occupied Pegu, the only remaining coastal province of Burma. An intense guerrilla resistance had to be overcome before complete British control of lower Burma could be established.

At the time of the Third Burma War 1885 Burma was ruled by King Thibaw. The British merchants of Rangoon and lower Burma had been complaining about the step-motherly treatment by Thibaw, who had also been negotiating commercial treaties with rival powers of France, Germany and

#### 266      A Brief History of Modern India

Italy. The French also planned to lay a rail link from Mandalay to the French territory, at a time when the British were in conflict with the French in Niger, Egypt and Madagascar. A humiliating fine had been

imposed on a British timber company by Thibaw. Dufferin ordered the invasion and final annexation of upper Burma in 1885.

The British had to face a strong guerrilla uprising in the whole of Burma soon after, and a nationalist movement after the First World War. The Burmese nationalists joined hands with the Indian National Congress. To weaken this link, Burma was separated from India in 1935. The Burmese nationalist movement further intensified under U Aung San during the Second World War, which finally led to independence for Burma on January 4, 1948.

Afghanistan, The problem of imperial defence and search for a scientific frontier towards the north-west brought the English into a clash with the hardy Afghans. In the early nineteenth century, increased Russian influence in Persia replaced British influence and thwarted an English scheme for establishment of a new route by River Euphrates to India. Especially after the Treaty of Turkomanchai (1828), the English got alarmed about possible Russian plans for India. Soon, there was a search for a scientific frontier from the Indian side. Passes of the north-west seemed to hold the keys to gateway of India. The need was felt for Afghanistan to be under control of a friendly prince.

Auckland, who came to India as the governor-general in 1836, advocated a forward policy. The Amir of Afghanistan, Dost Mohammed, wanted British friendship but made it conditional on the British to help him recover Peshawar from Sikhs—a condition which the British Government in India rejected. Dost Mohammed now turned to Russia and Persia for help. This prompted the Government to go ahead with the forward policy, and a tripartite treaty (1838) was entered into by the British, Sikhs and Shah Shuja (who had been deposed from the Afghan throne in 1809 and had been living since then as a British pensioner at Ludhiana). The treaty provided that

#### Administrative Changes After 1857 267

- \* Shah Shuja be enthroned with the armed help of the Sikhs; Company to remain in the background, 'jingling the money-bag'.
  - \* Shah Shuja conduct foreign affairs with the advice of the Sikhs and the British.
  - \* Shah Shuja give up his sovereign rights over Amirs of Sindh in return for a large sum of money.
  - \* Shah Shuja recognise Maharaja Ranjit Singh's (the Sikh ruler) claims over the Afghan territories on the right bank of River Indus.
- But soon, there was a drastic change in political situation of the area because of the removal of the original irritants— Persia lifted siege of Herat and Russia recalled envoy from Kabul. Nevertheless the British decided to go ahead with their forward policy. This resulted in the First Afghan War (1838– 42). The British intention was to establish a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression from the north-west.

An English army entered triumphantly into Kabul (August 1839) after a successful attack. Most of the tribes had already been won over by bribes. Dost Mohammed, surrendered (1840) and Shah Shuja was made the Amir of Afghanistan. But Shah Shuja was unacceptable to the Afghans. As

the British withdrew, the Afghans rose in rebellion, killing the garrison commander in Kabul. The British were compelled to sign a treaty (1841) with Afghan chiefs by which they agreed to evacuate Afghanistan and restore Dost Mohammed. The grandiose plan exploded like a balloon. Under a new expedition, the British reoccupied Kabul in September 1842, but having learned their lessons well, they arrived at a settlement with Dost Mohammed by which the British evacuated Kabul and recognised him as the independent ruler of Afghanistan.

The First Afghan War cost India one-and-a-half crore rupees and nearly 20,000 men.

John Lawrence (governor-general from 1864 to 1869) adopted a policy of masterly inactivity which was a reaction

## 268 A Brief History of Modern India

to disasters of the First Afghan War (1838-42) and an outcome of practical common sense and an intimate knowledge of the frontier problem and of Afghan passion for independence. Even when Dost Mohammed died in 1863, there was no interference in the war of succession. Lawrence's policy rested on fulfilment of two conditions

- (i) peace at frontier was not disturbed, and
- (ii) no candidate in civil war sought foreign help.

As Sher Ali established himself on throne, Lawrence tried to cultivate friendship with him. With the arrival of Lytton in 1876, there was a perceptible policy change. The new foreign policy was of 'proud reserve' of having scientific frontiers and safeguarding 'spheres of influence'. According to Lytton, the relations with Afghanistan could no longer be left ambiguous. Lytton made an offer of a favourable treaty to Sher Ali, but the Amir wanted friendship with both his powerful neighbours, Russia and England, while keeping both of them at an arm's length. Later, Sher Ali refused to keep a British envoy in Kabul though he had allowed a Russian envoy in Kabul. Lytton was stunned, and when the Russians withdrew their envoy from Kabul, Lytton decided to invade Afghanistan (Second Afghan war 1878-80). Sher Ali fled in face of British invasion and the Treaty of Gandamak (May 1879) was signed with Yakub Khan, the eldest son of Sher Ali. The treaty provided that

\* the Amir conduct his foreign policy with the advice of Government of India,

\* a permanent British resident be stationed at Kabul,

\* the Government of India give the Amir all support against foreign aggression, and an annual subsidy.

But soon, Yakub had to abdicate under popular pressure and the British had to recapture Kabul and Kandhar. Lytton chalked out a plan for dismemberment of Afghanistan, but could not carry it out. Ripon abandoned this plan and decided on a policy of buffer state. Abdur Rahman agreed not to

## Administrative Changes After 1857 269



maintain political relations with any other power except the British, thus losing control over the foreign policy.

After the First World War and the Russian Revolution (1917), Afghans demanded full independence. Habibullah (who succeeded Abdur Rahman in 1901) was killed in 1919 and the new ruler Amamullah declared open war on the British. Peace came in 1921 when Afghanistan recovered independence in foreign affairs.

#### North-West Frontier

The successive Indian rulers tried to reach out of this region lying between the Indus and Afghanistan in search for scientific frontier. The conquest of Sindh (1843) and annexation of Punjab (1849) carried British boundaries beyond Indus and brought them in contact with Baluch and Pathan tribes, who were mostly independent, but the Amir of Afghanistan claimed nominal sovereignty over them.

During the 1840s, John Jacob established a system of mobile defence patrols in Sindh and also reclaimed wasteland and started cultivation. Lord Dalhousie adopted a conciliatory approach towards tribes and set up a series of fortified posts to check raids. Since 1849 the frontier policy of the British was guided by the non-interventionist school of Lord Lawrence. But, the arrival of Lytton in 1876 marked the end of masterly inactivity. The English policymakers realised the importance of having a scientific frontier, particularly after the Second Afghan War and occupation of Afghan territory. Lansdowne (viceroy during 1888-94) gave further impetus to this forward policy. During 1870s, several administrative measures were also adopted in the frontier—civil officers were encouraged to learn Pashtu or Baluchi, a local force as auxiliary to Punjab Frontier Force was established, and colonies of Afridis, Waziris, Gurchanis, Bhattanis and Bugtis were formed in the British territory.

During 1891-92, the British occupation of Hunza, Nagar in Gilagit valley, which were passes commanding

#### 270 A Brief History of Modern India

communications with Chitral, alarmed Abdur Rahman (the Amir of Afghanistan). A compromise was finally reached by drawing a boundary line known as Durand Line between Afghan and British territories. Amir received some districts and his subsidy was increased. But the Durand Agreement (1893) failed to keep peace and soon there were tribal uprisings. To check these, a permanent British garrison was established at Chitral and troops posted to guard Malakand Pass, but tribal uprisings continued till 1898.

Curzon (the viceroy between 1899 and 1905), followed a policy of withdrawal and concentration. British troops withdrew from advanced posts which were replaced by tribal levies, trained and commanded by British officers. He also encouraged the tribals to maintain peace. He created the North-West Frontier Province directly under the Government of India (earlier, it was under control of the lieutenant governor of Punjab). Overall, Curzon's policies resulted in a peaceful north-west

frontier. The peaceful conditions continued thereafter with occasional tribal uprisings. In January 1932, it was announced that the NWFP was to be constituted as a governor's province. Since 1947, the province belongs to Pakistan.

Tibet, Tibet was ruled by a theocracy of Buddhist monks (lamas) under nominal suzerainty of China. The British efforts to establish friendly and commercial relations with Tibet had not yielded any result in the past and a deadlock had been reached by the time of Curzon's arrival in India. The Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was ineffective and Russian influence at Lhasa was increasing. There were reports of Russian arms and ammunition finding way into Tibet. Curzon felt alarmed and sent a small Gorkha contingent under Colonel Younghusband on a special mission to Tibet to oblige Tibetans to come to an agreement. The Tibetans refused to negotiate and offered non-violent resistance. Younghusband pushed his way into Lhasa (August 1904) while the Dalai Lama fled. Younghusband

#### Administrative Changes After 1857 271

dictated terms to the Tibetan officials which provided that

- \* Tibet would pay an indemnity of Rs 75 lakh at the rate of one lakh rupees per annum,
- \* as a security for payment, the Indian Government would occupy the Chumbi Valley (territory between Bhutan and Sikkim) for 75 years,
- \* Tibet would respect frontier of Sikkim, \* Trade marts would be opened at Yatung, Gyantse, Gartok.
- \* Tibet would not grant any concession for railways, roads, telegraph, etc to any foreign state, but give Great Britain some control over foreign affairs of Tibet.

But later, on the insistence of the secretary of state and true to the pledge given to Russia, the treaty was revised reducing the indemnity from Rs 75 lakh to Rs 25 lakh and providing for evacuation of Chumbi valley after three years (the valley was actually evacuated in January 1908).

The Younghusband mission mainly served the purpose of gratifying the imperialist tendencies of the viceroy and no permanent result followed. Only China gained out of the whole affair because the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 provided that the two great powers would not negotiate with Tibet, except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government. Still, Curzon's policy counteracted all Russian schemes in Tibet.

#### Views

All experience teaches us that where a dominant race rules another, the mildest form of government is despotism. Charles Wood (the secretary of state for India).

Systems of nomination, representation and election were all means of enlisting Indians to work for imperial ends. Anil Seal

I am sorry to hear of the increasing friction between the Hindus and Mohammedans in the north-west and the Punjab. One

272 A Brief History of Modern India

hardly knows what to wish, for unity of ideas and action could be very dangerous politically; divergence of ideas and collision are administratively troublesome. Of the two, the latter is least risky, though it throws anxiety and responsibility upon those on the spot where the friction exists. Hamilton (secretary of state, 1897)  
The English were an imperial race, we were told, with Godgiven right to govern us and keep us in subjection; if we protested, we were reminded of the tiger qualities of an imperial race. Jawaharlal Nehru.  
for either was highly doubtful. F.G. Hutchins .

Administrative Changes After 1857

273

### Summary

- CHANGED SITUATION AFTER 1857.
- Shock of revolt of 1857.
- Emergence of new colonial powers.
- British supremacy in world economy challenged.
- Large-scale British capital investment in India.
- CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT AT THE CENTRE.
- The Crown assumed the power to govern—to be exercised through a secretary of state.
- Indians could be associated with legislative process in Imperial Legislative Council, which had very limited power.
- CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION.
- A process of financial and administrative devolution initiated in 1870. Half-hearted and inadequate measures, aimed at increasing revenue only, introduced.
- CHANGES IN LOCAL BODIES A process of decentralisation initiated in 1860s. Ripon's Resolution of 1882, a positive step.
- Overall paucity of funds and absence of real powers.
- CHANGES IN THE ARMY Supremacy of European branch ensured.
- Indian branch to be reorganised on the basis of balance and counterpoise.
- Indians to be excluded from important and strategic locations and branches.
- The Army to be used for the defence of the empire and its expansion, and to promote commercial interests of Great Britain.
- PUBLIC SERVICES Very tough for Indians to be able to enter it.
- Subordinate them to British authority.
- ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES Divide and Rule.
- Hostility to educated Indians.
- Zamindars and landlords propped as counterweights to the nationalists.
- Reversal of policy of support to social reforms.
- Social services ignored.
- Half-hearted and inadequate labour legislations introduced.
- Stifling of press wherever seen to be helping the nationalist upsurge.
- Racial arrogance.
- FOREIGN POLICY Reach out to natural geographical frontiers for internal cohesion and defence.
- Keep other European powers at an arm's length.
- Promote British economic and commercial interests.

## CHAPTER 8

### Economic Impact of British Rule in India

The major difference between the British colonists in India and earlier invaders was that none of the earlier invaders made any structural changes in Indian economy or drained away India's wealth as tribute. British rule in India caused a transformation of India's economy, into a colonial economy, i.e., the structure and operation of Indian economy were determined by the interests of the British economy.

A detailed survey of the economic impact of British rule follows.

#### DEINDUSTRIALISATION—RUIN OF ARTISANS AND HANDICRAFTSMEN

Cheap and machine-made imports flooded the Indian market after the Charter Act of 1813 allowing one-way free trade for the British citizens. On the other hand, Indian products found it more and more difficult to penetrate the European markets. After 1820, European markets were virtually closed to Indian exports. The newly introduced rail network helped the European products to reach the remotest corners of the country.

The loss of traditional livelihood was not accompanied by a process of industrialisation in India, as had happened in other rapidly industrialising countries of the time. This resulted in deindustrialisation of India at a time when Europe was witnessing a reintensified Industrial Revolution. This happened at a time when Indian artisans and handicraftsmen were already feeling the crunch due to loss of patronage by princes and the nobility, who were now under the influence of new western tastes and values.

### 274 Economic Impact of British Rule in India

275

Another feature of deindustrialisation was the decline of many cities and a process of ruralisation of India. Many artisans, faced with diminishing returns and repressive policies (in Bengal, during the Company's rule, artisans were paid low wages and forced to sell their products at low prices), abandoned their professions, moved to villages and took to agriculture. This resulted in increased pressure on land. An overburdened agriculture sector was a major cause of poverty during British rule and this upset the village economic set-up. From being a net exporter, India became a net importer.

#### IMPOVERISHMENT OF PEASANTRY

The Government, only interested in maximisation of rents and in securing its share of revenue, had enforced the Permanent Settlement system in large parts. Transferability of land was one feature of the new settlement which caused great insecurity to the tenants who lost all their traditional rights in land. There was little spending by Government on improvement of land productivity. The zamindars, with increased powers, resorted to summary evictions, demanded illegal dues and 'begar' to maximise their share in the produce and, as such, had no

incentive to invest for improvement of agriculture. The overburdened peasants had to approach the money-lenders to be able to pay their dues to the zamindars. The moneylender, who was often also the village grain-merchant, forced the farmer to sell the produce at low prices to clear his dues. The powerful money-lender was also able to manipulate the judiciary and law in his favour.

The peasant turned out to be the ultimate sufferer under the triple burden of the Government, zamindar and moneylender. His hardship increased at the time of famine and scarcity. This was as much true for the zamindari areas as for areas under Ryotwari and Mahalwari systems.

#### EMERGENCE OF NEW LAND RELATIONS, RUIN OF OLD ZAMINDARS

By 1815, half the total land in Bengal had passed into new hands. The new zamindars, with increased powers but with

#### 276 A Brief History of Modern India

little or no avenues for new investments, resorted to landgrabbing and sub-infeudation. Increase in number of intermediaries to be paid gave rise to absentee landlordism and increased the burden on the peasant. Since the demand for land was high, prices went up and so did the liabilities of the peasant. With no traditional or benevolent ties with the tenants, the zamindar had no incentive to invest in the improvement of agriculture. The interests of the zamindars lay only in the perpetuation of British rule and in opposing the national movement.

#### STAGNATION AND DETERIORATION OF AGRICULTURE

The cultivator had neither the means nor any incentive to invest in agriculture. The zamindar had no roots in the villages, while the Government spent little on agricultural, technical or mass education. All this, together with fragmentation of land due to sub-infeudation, made it difficult to introduce modern technology which caused a perpetually low level of productivity.

#### COMMERCIALISATION OF INDIAN AGRICULTURE

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, another significant trend was the emergence of the commercialisation of agriculture. So far, agriculture had been a way of life rather than a business enterprise. Now agriculture began to be influenced by commercial considerations. Certain specialised crops began to be grown not for consumption in the village but for sale in the national and even international markets. Commercial crops like cotton, jute, groundnut, oilseeds, sugarcane, tobacco, etc were more remunerative than foodgrains. Again, the cultivation of crops like condiments, spices, fruits and vegetables could cater to a wider market. Perhaps, the commercialisation trend reached the highest level of development in the plantation sector, i.e., in tea, coffee, rubber, indigo, etc., which was mostly owned by Europeans and the produce was for sale in a wider market.

The new market trend of commercialisation and

specialisation was encouraged by many factors—spread of money economy, replacement of custom and tradition by 'competition and contract, emergence of a unified national market, growth of internal trade, improvement in communications through rail and roads and boost to international trade given by entry of British finance capital, etc.

For the Indian peasant, commercialisation seemed a forced process. There was hardly any surplus for him to invest in commercial crops, given the subsistence level at which he lived, while commercialisation linked Indian agriculture with international market trends and their fluctuations. For instance, the cotton of the 1860s pushed up prices but this mostly benefited the intermediaries, and when the slump in prices came in 1866, it hit the cultivators the most, bringing in its turn heavy indebtedness, famine and agrarian riots in the Deccan in the 1870s. Thus, the cultivator hardly emerged better from the new commercialisation trend.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN INDUSTRY

It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that modern machine-based industries started coming up in India. The first cotton textile mill was set up in 1853 in Bombay by Cowasjee Nanabhoy and the first jute mill came up in 1855 in Rishra (Bengal). But most of the >modern industries were foreign-owned and controlled by British managing agencies.

There was a rush of >foreign capital in India at this time due to prospects of high profits, availability of cheap labour, cheap and readily available raw material, ready market in India and the neighbours, diminishing avenues for investments at home, willingness of the administration to provide all help, and ready markets abroad for some Indian exports such as tea, jute and manganese.

Indian-owned industries came up in cotton textiles and jute in the nineteenth century and in sugar, cement, etc in the twentieth century. Indian-owned industries suffered from many handicaps credit problems, no tariff protection by

#### 278 A Brief History of Modern India

Government, unequal competition from foreign companies, and stiff opposition from British capitalist interests who were backed by sound financial and technical infrastructure at home.

The colonial factor also caused certain structural and institutional changes. The industrial development was characterised by a lopsided pattern—core and heavy industries and power generation were neglected and some regions were favoured more than the others causing regional disparities. These regional disparities hampered the process of nation building. In the absence of careful nurturing of technical education, the industry lacked sufficient technical manpower. Socially, the rise of an industrial capitalist class and the working class was an important feature of this phase.

#### RISE OF INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

Indian traders, moneylenders and bankers had amassed some wealth as junior partners of English merchant capitalists in India. Their role fitted in the British scheme of colonial exploitation. The Indian moneylender provided loans to hardpressed agriculturists and thus facilitated the state collection of revenue. The Indian trader carried imported British products to the remotest corners and helped in the movement of Indian agricultural products for exports. The indigenous bankers helped both in the process of distribution and collection. But, the colonial situation retarded the development of a healthy and independent industrial bourgeoisie, and its development was different from other independent countries like Germany and Japan.

#### ECONOMIC DRAIN

The term 'economic drain' refers to a portion of national product of India which was not available for consumption of its people, but was being drained away to Britain for political reasons and India was not getting adequate economic or material returns for it. The drain theory was put forward by Dadabhai Naoroji in his book Poverty and British Rule in India. The major components of this drain were salaries and

#### Economic Impact of British Rule in India 279

pensions of civil and military officials, interests on loans taken by the Indian Government from abroad, profits on foreign investment in India, stores purchased in Britain for civil and military departments, payments to be made for shipping, banking and insurance services which stunted the growth of Indian enterprise in these services.

The drain of wealth checked and retarded capital formation in India while the same portion of wealth accelerated the growth of British economy. The surplus from British economy re-entered India as finance capital, further draining India of its wealth. This had immense effect on income and employment potential within India.

#### FAMINE AND POVERTY

Regular recurrence of famines became a common feature of daily existence in India. These famines were not just foodgrain scarcity-based phenomena, but were a direct result of poverty unleashed by colonial forces in India. Between 1850 and 1900, about 2.8 crore people died in famines.

#### NATIONALIST CRITIQUE OF COLONIAL ECONOMY

The early intellectuals of the first half of the nineteenth century supported British rule under the impression that it would modernise the country based on latest technology and capitalist economic organisation. After the 1860s, disillusionment started to set in among the politically conscious and they began to probe into the reality of British rule in India.

The foremost among these economic analysts was Dadabhai Naoroji, the 'Grand Old Man of India', who after a brilliant analysis of the colonial economy put forward the theory of economic drain in Poverty and British

Rule in India. Other economic analysts included Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Romesh Chandra Dutt (The Economic History of India), Gopal Krishna Gokhale, G. Subramaniya Ayer and Prithwishchandra. Ray. The essence of nineteenth century colonialism, they said, lay in the transformation of India into a supplier of foodstuffs and raw-materials to the metropolis,

## 280 A Brief History of Modern India

Economic impact of British Rule in India 281

a market for metropolitan manufacturers and a field for investment of British capital. These early nationalist analysts organised intellectual agitations and advocated a complete severance of India's economic subservience to Britain and the development of an independent economy based on modern industries.

The basic assertion of these early intellectuals was that India was poor and growing poorer due to British imperialism, and since the causes of India's economic backwardness were man-made, they were explainable and removable. The problem of poverty was seen as a problem of raising productive capacity and energy of the people or as a problem of national development, thus making poverty national issue. This helped in rallying all sections of society around common economic issues. Also, development was equated with industrialisation. This industrialisation was to be based on Indian and not foreign capital because, according to the early nationalists, foreign capital replaced and suppressed instead of augmenting and encouraging Indian capital. This suppression caused economic drain, further strengthening British hold over India. The political consequences of foreign capital investments were equally harmful as they caused political subjugation and created vested interests which sought security for investors, thus perpetuating the foreign rule.

These analysts exposed the force of British arguments that the growth of foreign trade and railways implied development for India. They argued back that the pattern of foreign trade was unfavourable to India. It relegated India to a position of importer of finished goods and exporter of raw materials and foodstuffs. The development of railways, they argued, was, not coordinated with India's industrial needs and it ushered in a commercial rather than an industrial revolution. The net effect of the railways was to enable foreign goods to outsell indigenous products. Further, the benefits from impetus to steel, machinery and capital investment in railways accrued to the British. G.V. Joshi remarked, "Expenditure on railways should be seen as an Indian subsidy to British industries."

The nationalists claimed that one-way free trade was ruining Indian handicrafts industry, exposing it to premature, unequal and unfair competition, while tariff policy was guided by British capitalist interests. On the finance front, taxes were levied to overburden the poor, sparing British capitalists and the bureaucrats. They demanded reduction of land revenue, abolition of salt tax, imposition of income tax and excise duties on consumer goods consumed by the rich middle



classes. The government expenditure, it was argued, was meant to serve colonial needs only, while development and welfare were ignored.

The drain theory incorporated all threads of the nationalist critique that it denuded India of its productive capital. According to nationalist estimates, the economic drain at that time was \* more than the total land revenue, or half the total government revenue, or one third of the total savings (in today's terms, it amounted to 8 per cent of the national product).

The concept of drain—one country taking away wealth from another country—was easily grasped by a nation of peasants for whom exploitation was a matter of daily experience.

The nationalist agitation on economic issues served to undermine the ideological hegemony of alien rulers over Indian minds that the foreign rule was in the interest of Indians, thus exposing the myth of its moral foundations. It was also shown clearly that India was poor because it was being ruled for British interests. This agitation, was one of the stimulants for intellectual unrest and spread of national consciousness during the moderate phase of freedom struggle (1875-1905)—the seed-time of national movement.

Till the end of the 19th century, the nationalists had been demanding some share in political power and control over the

282            A Brief History of Modern India

purse. During the first decade of the 20th century, they started demanding self-rule, like United Kingdom or the colonies, and prominent among such nationalists was Dadabhai Naoroji.

#### Views

Where foreign capital has been sunk in a country. the administration of that country becomes at once the concern of the bondholders. The Hindu (September 1889).

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. Dadabhai Naoroji.

Taxation raised by the King, says the Indian poet, is dike the moisture sucked up by the sun, to be returned to the earth as fertilising rain; but the moisture raised from the Indian soil now descends as fertilising rain largely on other lands, not on India. R.C. DIM.

Trade cannot thrive without efficient administration, while the latter is not worth attending to in the absence of profits of the former. So, always with the assent and often to the dictates of the Chamber of Commerce, the Government of India is carried on, and this is the 'White Man's Burden'. Sachidanand Sinha.

Under the native despot the people keep and enjoy what they produce, though at times they suffer some violence. Under ,the British Indian

despot, the man is at peace, there is no violence; his substance is drained away, unseen, peaceably and subtly- he starves in peace, and peaceably perishes in peace, with law and order. Dadabhai Naoroji. The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce; the bones of cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of north India. William Bentinck.

Economic Impact of British Rule in India 283

## Summary

- ECONOMIC IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

Deindustrialisation—ruin of artisans and handicraftsmen.

Impoverishment of peasantry-ruralisation of India.

Emergence of new land relations—ruin of old zamindars.

Stagnation and deterioration of agriculture.

Commercialisation of Indian agriculture.

Development of modern industry.

Rise of Indian national bourgeoisie.

Economic drain.

Famine and poverty.

- NATIONALIST CRITIQUE

India getting poorer due to colonial exploitation.

Problem of poverty—a national problem of raising productive capacities and energy.

Development equated with industrialisation, which should take place through Indian, not foreign capital.

British policies on trade, finance, infrastructure development, expenditure designed to serve imperialist interests.

Need for complete severance of India's economic subservience to Britain and development of an independent economy.

## CHAPTER 9

## Development of Indian Press

James Augustus Hickey in 1780 started The Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser, the first newspaper in India, which was seized in 1872 because of its outspoken criticism of the Government. Later more newspapers/journals came up—The Bengal Journal, Calcutta Chronicle, Madras Courier, Bombay Herald. The Company's officers were worried that these newspapers might reach London and expose their misdeeds. Thus they saw the need for curbs on the press.

## EARLY REGULATIONS

Censorship of Press Act, 1799, Lord Wellesley enacted this, anticipating French invasion of India. It imposed almost wartime press restrictions including pre-censorship. These restrictions were relaxed under Lord

Hastings, who had progressive views, and in 1818, pre-censorship was dispensed with.

Licensing Regulations, 1823, The acting governor-general John Adams, who had reactionary views, enacted these. According to these regulations, starting or using a press without licence was a penal offence. These restrictions were directed chiefly against Indian language newspapers or those edited by Indians. Rammohan Roy's Mirat-ul-Akbar had to stop publication.

Press Act of 1835 or Metcalfe Act, Metcalfe (governorgeneral-1835-36) repealed the obnoxious 1823 ordinance and earned the epithet, "liberator of the Indian press". The new Press Act (1835) required a printer/publisher to give a precise account of premises of a publication and cease functioning, if required by a similar declaration.

The result of a liberal press policy was a rapid growth of newspapers.

284

#### Development of Indian Press 285

Licensing Act, 1857, Due to the emergency caused by the 1857 revolt, this Act imposed licensing restrictions in addition to the already existing registration procedure laid down by Metcalfe Act and the Government reserved the right to stop publication and circulation of any book, newspaper or printed matter.

Registration Act, 1867, This replaced Metcalfe's Act of 1835 and was of a regulatory, not restrictive, nature. As per the Act,

- (i) every book/newspaper was required to print the name of the printer and the publisher and the place of the publication; and
- (ii) a copy was to be submitted to the local government within one month of the publication of a book.

#### STRUGGLE BY EARLY NATIONALISTS TO SECURE PRESS FREEDOM

Right from the early nineteenth century, defence of civil liberties, including the freedom of the press, had been high on nationalist agenda. As early as 1824, Raja Rammohan Roy had protested against a resolution restricting the freedom of the press.

The early phase of nationalist movement from around 1870 to 1918 focussed more on political propaganda and education, formation and propagation of nationalist ideology and arousing, training, mobilisation and consolidation of public opinion, than on mass agitation or active mobilisation of masses through open meetings. For this purpose the press proved a crucial tool in the hands of the nationalists. The Indian National Congress in its early days relied solely on the press to propagate its resolutions and proceedings.

Many newspapers emerged during these years under distinguished and fearless journalists. These included Hindu and Swadesamitran under G. Subramaniya Aiyar, The Bengalee under Surendranath Banerjee, Voice of

India under Dadabhai Naoroji, Amrita Bazar Patrika under Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh, Indian Mirror under N.N. Sen, Kesari (in Marathi) and Maharatta (in English) under Balgangadhar Tilak, Sudharak under Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Hindustan and

286 A Brief History of Modern India

Advocate under G.P. Verma. Other main newspapers included, Tribune and Akbhar-i-ant in Punjab, Gujarati, Indu Prakash, Dhyan Prakash and Kal in Bombay and Som Prakash, Banganivasi and Sadharani in Bengal.

These newspapers were not established as profit-making business ventures but were seen as rendering national and public service. In fact, these newspapers had a wide reach and they stimulated a library movement. Their impact was not limited to cities and towns; these newspapers reached the remote villages, where each news item and editorial would be read and discussed thoroughly in the 'local libraries' which would gather around a single newspaper. In this way, these libraries served the purpose of not only political education but also of political participation. In these newspapers, government acts and policies were put to critical scrutiny. They acted as an institution of opposition to the Government.

The Government on its part had enacted many strident laws, such as Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code which provided that anyone trying to cause disaffection against the British Government in India was to be transported for life or for any term or imprisoned upto three years. But the nationalist-minded journalists had evolved many clever strategies to subvert these legal hurdles. For instance, writings hostile to the Government used to be prefaced with sentiments of loyalty to the Government or critical writings of socialists or Irish nationalists from newspapers in England used to be quoted. This was a difficult task which required an intelligent mix of simplicity with subtlety.

The national movement, from its very beginning, stood for the freedom of press. The Indian newspapers became highly critical of Lord Lytton's administration especially regarding its inhuman treatment to victims of the famine of 1876-77. The Government struck back with the Vernacular Press Act, 1878.

VERNACULAR PRESS ACT, 1878

A bitter legacy of the 1857 revolt was the racial bitterness between the ruler and the ruled. After 1858, the European

Development of Indian Press 287

press always rallied behind the Government in political controversies while the vernacular press was critical of the Government. There was a strong public opinion against the imperialistic policies of Lytton, compounded by terrible famine (1876-77), on the one hand, and lavish expenditure on the imperial Delhi Durbar, on the other.

The Vernacular Press Act (VPA) was designed to 'better control' the vernacular press and effectively punish and repress seditious writing. The provisions of the Act included the following.

1. The district magistrate was empowered to call upon the printer and publisher of any vernacular newspaper to enter into a bond with the Government undertaking not to cause disaffection against the Government or antipathy between persons of different religions, caste, race through published material; the printer and publisher could also be required to deposit security which could be forfeited if the regulation were contravened, and press equipment could be seized if the offence re-occurred.

2. The magistrate's action was final and no appeal could be made in a court of law.

3. A vernacular newspaper could get exemption from the operation of the Act by submitting proofs to a government censor.

The Act came to be nicknamed "the gagging Act". The worst features of this Act were

- (i) discrimination between English and vernacular press,
- (ii) no right of appeal.

Under VPA, proceedings were instituted against Som Prakash, Bharat Mihir, Dacca Prakash and Samachar. (Incidentally, the Amrita Bazar Patrika turned overnight into an English newspaper to escape the VPA.) Later, the pre-censorship clause was repealed, and a press commissioner was appointed to supply authentic and accurate news to the press. There was strong opposition to the Act and finally Ripon repealed it in 1882.

In 1883, Surendranath Banerjee became the first Indian

## 288 A Brief History of Modern India

journalist to be imprisoned. In an angry editorial in The Bengalee Banerjee had criticised a judge of Calcutta High Court for being insensitive to the religious sentiments of Bengalis in one of his judgements.

Balgangadhar Tilak is most frequently associated with the nationalist fight for the freedom of press. Tilak had been building up anti-imperialist sentiments among the public through Ganapati festivals (started in 1893), Shivaji festivals (started in 1896) and through his newspapers Kesari and Maharatta. He was among the first to advocate bringing the lower middle classes, the peasants, artisans and workers into the Congress fold. In 1896, he organised an all Maharashtra campaign for boycott of foreign cloth in opposition to imposition of excise duty on cotton. In 1896-97 he initiated a no-tax campaign in Maharashtra, urging farmers to withhold the payment of revenue if their crop had failed. In 1897, plague occurred in Poona. Although Tilak supported government measures to check plague, there was large-scale popular resentment against heartless and harsh methods such as segregation and house searches. The popular unrest resulted in murder of the chairman of the Plague Committee in Poona by the Chapekar brothers. The government policies on tariff, currency and famine were also behind this popular resentment.

The Government had been looking for an opportunity to check this militant trend and hostility in the press. They decided to make Tilak a victim to set an example to the public. Tilak was arrested after the murder of Rand on the basis of the publication of a poem, 'Shivaji's Utterances', in Kesari, and of a speech which Tilak had delivered at the Shivaji festival, justifying Afzal Khan's murder by Shivaji. Tilak's defence of Shivaji's killing of Afzal Khan was portrayed by the prosecution as an incitement to kill British officials. Tilak was held guilty and awarded rigorous imprisonment of eighteen months. Simultaneously several other editors in Bombay presidency were tried and given similar harsh sentences. There were widespread protests against these measures. Overnight Tilak became a national hero and was given the title of 'Lokmanya'

Development of Indian Press 289

(respected and honoured by the people)—a new leader who preached with his deeds.

In 1898, the Government amended Section 124A and added another Section 153A which made it a criminal offence for anyone to bring into contempt the Government of India or to create hatred among different classes, that is, vis-a-vis the English in India. This also led to nation-wide protests. During Swadeshi and Boycott Movements and due to rise of militant nationalist trends, several repressive laws were passed.

Newspaper (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908 Aimed against Extremist nationalist activity, the Act empowered the magistrates to confiscate press property which published objectionable material likely to cause incitement to murder/ acts of violence.

Indian Press Act, 1910 This Act revived the worst features of the VPA—local government was empowered to demand a security at registration from the printer/publisher and forfeit/deregister if it was an offending newspaper, and the printer of a newspaper was required to submit two copies of each issue to local government free of charge.

Tilak as the leader of militant nationalists was tried on charges of sedition and transported to Mandalay (Burma) for six years. This led to countrywide protests. In Bombay, textile workers and railway workshop workers took on the Army in streets and went on strike for days. Lenin hailed this as the entrance of the Indian working class on the political stage.

DURING AND AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR, Defence of India Rules were imposed for repression of political agitation and free public criticism during the First World War. In 1921, on the recommendations of a Press Committee chaired by Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Press Acts of 1908 and 1910 were repealed.

Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act, 1931, This Act gave sweeping powers to provincial governments to suppress propaganda for Civil Disobedience Movement. It was further

290                    A Brief History of Modern India

amplified in 1932 to include all activities calculated to undermine government authority.

**DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR** Under the Defence of India Rules, pre-censorship was imposed and amendments made in Press Emergency Act and Official Secrets Act. At one time, publication of all news related to Congress activity was declared illegal.

#### **AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

Press Enquiry Committee, 1947, The Committee was set up to examine press laws in the light of fundamental rights formulated by the Constituent Assembly. It recommended repeal of Indian Emergency Powers Act, 1931, amendments in Press and Registration of Books Act, modifications in Sections 124-A and 156-A of IPC, among others.

Press (Objectionable Matters) Act, 1951, The Act was passed along with amendment to Article 19 (2) of the Constitution. The Act empowered the government to demand and forfeit security for publication of "objectionable matter". Aggrieved owners and printers were given right to demand trial by jury. It remained in force till 1956.

Press Commission under Justice Rajadhyaksha, The commission recommended in 1954 the establishing of All India Press Council, fixing the press-page schedule system for newspapers, banning crossword puzzle competitions, evolving a strict code of advertisements by newspapers, and the desirability of preventing concentration in ownership of Indian newspapers.

Other Acts passed include Delivering of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954; Working Journalists (Conditions of Services) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act; 1955; Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1956; and Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publications) Act, 1960.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **Development of Education**

For the first 60 years of its dominion in India, the East India Company, a trading and profit-making concern, took no interest in the promotion of education. Some minor exceptions were efforts by individuals

- The Calcutta Madrasah was established by Warren Hastings in 1781 for the study of Muslim law and related subjects.
- The Sanskrit College was established by Jonathan Duncan, the resident, at Benaras in 1791 for study of Hindu law and philosophy.
- Fort William College was set up by Wellesley in 1800 for training of civil servants of the Company in languages and customs of Indians (closed in 1802).

The Calcutta Madrasah and the Sanskrit College were designed to provide a regular supply of qualified Indians to help the administration of law in the Company's court, and the knowledge of classical languages and vernaculars was useful in correspondence with Indian states. Enlightened Indians and missionaries started exerting pressure on the Government to promote modern, secular, western education since,

- (a) enlightened Indians thought that western education was the remedy for social, economic and political ills of the country;
- (b) missionaries thought that modern education would destroy the faith of Indians in their own religions and they would take to Christianity.

Serampore missionaries were, in particular, very enthusiastic about spread of education.

A HUMBLE BEGINNING BY CHARTER ACT OF 1813, The Act incorporated the principle of encouraging learned Indians and promoting knowledge of modern sciences in the

291

## 292 A Brief History of Modern India

country. The Act directed the Company to sanction one lakh rupees annually for this purpose. However, even this petty amount was not made available till 1823, mainly because of the controversy raged on the question of the direction that this expenditure should take.

Meanwhile, efforts of enlightened Indians such as Raja Rammohan Roy bore fruit and a grant was sanctioned for Calcutta College set up in 1817 by educated Bengalis, imparting English education in western humanities and sciences. The Government also set up three Sanskrit colleges at Calcutta, Delhi and Agra.

ORIENTALIST-ANGLICIST CONTROVERSY Within the General Committee on Public Instruction, the Anglicists argued that the government spending on education should be exclusively for modern studies.

The Orientalists said while western sciences and literature should be taught to prepare students to take up jobs, emphasis should be placed on expansion of traditional Indian learning.

Even the Anglicists were divided over the question of medium of instruction—one faction was for English language as the medium, while the other faction was for Indian languages (vernaculars) for the purpose.

Unfortunately there was a great deal of confusion over English and vernacular languages as media of instruction and as objects of study.

Lord Macaulay's Minute (1835), This famous minute settled the row in favour of Anglicists—the limited government resources were to be devoted to teaching of western sciences and literature through the medium of English language alone. Lord Macaulay held the view that "Indian learning was inferior to European learning"—which was true as far as physical and social sciences in the contemporary stage were concerned.



The Government soon made English as the medium of instruction in its schools and colleges and opened a few English schools and colleges instead of a large number of elementary

#### Development of Education 293

schools, thus neglecting mass education. The British planned to educate a small section of upper and middle classes, thus creating a class "Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" who would act as interpreters between the Government and masses and would enrich the vernaculars by which knowledge of western sciences and literature would reach the masses. This was called the 'downward filtration theory'.

Modern ideas, if not education, did filter down to the masses, though not in a form desired by the rulers, but through political parties, press, pamphlets, public platforms, etc. Modern education only helped this process by making available the basic literature on physical and social sciences to nationalists, thus stimulating their capacity to make social analysis—otherwise the content, structure and curricula of modern education served colonial interests.

**EFFORTS OF THOMSON**, James Thomson, lieutenant-governor of NW Provinces (1843–53), developed a comprehensive scheme of village education through the medium of vernacular languages. In these village schools, useful subjects such as mensuration and agriculture sciences were taught. The purpose was to train personnel for the newly set up Revenue and Public Works Department.

**WOOD'S DESPATCH (1854)**, In 1854, Charles Wood prepared a despatch on an educational system for India. Considered the "Magna Carta of English Education in India", this document was the first comprehensive plan for the spread of education in India.

1. It asked the Government of India to assume responsibility for education of the masses, thus repudiating the 'downward filtration theory', at least on paper.
2. It systematised the hierarchy from vernacular primary schools in villages at bottom, followed by Anglo-Vernacular High Schools and an affiliated college at the district level, and affiliating universities in the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

#### 294 A Brief History of Modern India

3. It recommended English as the medium of instruction for higher studies and vernaculars at school level.
4. It laid stress on female and vocational, education, and on teachers' training.
5. It laid down that the education imparted in government institutions should be secular.
6. It recommended a system of grants-in-aid to encourage private enterprise.

In 1857, universities at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were set up and later, departments of education were set up in all provinces. The Bethune School founded by Bethune at Calcutta (1849) was the first fruit of a powerful movement for education of women which arose in 1840s and 1850s. Bethune was the president of the Council of Education. Mostly due to Bethune's efforts, girls' schools were set up on a sound footing and brought under government's grants-in-aid and inspection system.

An Agriculture Institute at Pusa (Bihar) and an Engineering Institute at Roorkee were started.

The ideals and methods of Wood's Despatch dominated the field for five decades which saw rapid westernisation of education system in India, with educational institutions run by European headmasters and principals. Missionary enterprises played their own part. Gradually, private Indian effort appeared in the field.

HUNTER EDUCATION COMMISSION (1882-83), Earlier schemes had neglected primary and secondary education. When education was shifted to provinces in 1870, primary and secondary education further suffered because the provinces already had limited resources at their disposal. In 1882, the Government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of W.W. Hunter to review the progress of education in the country since the Despatch of 1854. The Hunter Commission mostly confined its recommendations to primary and secondary education. The commission—

Development of Education                      295

(i) emphasised that state's special care is required for extension and improvement of primary education, and that primary education should be imparted through vernacular.

(ii) recommended transfer of control of primary education to newly set up district and municipal boards.

(iii) recommended that secondary (High School) education should have two divisions—

® literary—leading upto university.

vocational—for commercial careers.

(iii) drew attention to inadequate facilities for female education, especially outside presidency towns and made recommendations for its spread.

The next two decades saw rapid growth and expansion of secondary and collegiate education with the participation of Indians. Also, more teaching-cum-examining universities were set up like the Punjab University (1882) and the Allahabad University (1887).

INDIAN UNIVERSITIES ACT, 1904, The dawn of 20th century saw political unrest. The official view was that under private management the quality of education had deteriorated and educational institutions acted as factories producing political revolutionaries. Nationalists accepted the decline in quality but accused the Government of not doing anything to eradicate illiteracy.

In 1902, Raleigh Commission was set up to go into conditions of universities in India: to suggest measures for improvement in their constitution and working. The commission precluded from reporting on primary or secondary education. Based on its recommendations, the Indian Universities Act was passed in 1904. As per the Act

- (i) universities were to give more attention to study and research;
- (ii) the number of fellows of a university and their period in office were reduced and most fellows were to be nominated by the Government;

## 296 A Brief History of Modern India

### Development of Education 297

(iii) Government was to have powers to veto universities' senate regulations and could amend these regulations or pass regulations on its own;

(iv) conditions were to be made stricter for affiliation of private colleges; and

- (iv) five lakh rupees were to be sanctioned per annum for five years for improvement of higher education and universities.

Curzon justified greater control over universities in the name of quality and efficiency, but actually sought to restrict education and to discipline the educated towards loyalty to the Government.

The nationalists saw in it an attempt to strengthen imperialism and to sabotage nationalist feelings. Gokhale called it a "retrograde measure".

### GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION ON EDUCATION POLICY-1913

In 1906, the progressive estate of Baroda introduced compulsory primary education throughout its territories. National leaders urged the Government to do so for British India (Gokhale made a powerful advocacy for it in the Legislative Assembly).

In its 1913 Resolution on Education Policy, the Government refused to take up the responsibility of compulsory education, but accepted the policy of removal of illiteracy and urged provincial governments to take early steps to provide free elementary education to the poorer and more backward sections. Private efforts were to be encouraged for this and the quality of secondary schools was to be improved. A university, it was decided, was to be established in each province and teaching activities of universities were to be encouraged.

SADDLER UNIVERSITY COMMISSION (1917-19), The commission was set up to study and report on problems of Calcutta University but its recommendations were applicable more or less to other universities also. It reviewed the entire field from school education to university education. It held the view that, for the improvement of university education, improvement of secondary education was a necessary precondition. Its observations were as follows:

1. School course should cover 12 years. Students should enter university after an intermediate stage (rather than matric) for a three-year degree course in university. This was done to

- (a) prepare students for university stage;

(b) relieve universities of a large number of below university standard students; and

(c) provide collegiate education to those not planning to go through university stage.

A separate board of secondary and 'intermediate' education should be set up for administration and control of secondary and intermediate education.

2. There should be less rigidity in framing university regulations.

3. A university should function as centralised, unitary residential-teaching autonomous body, rather than as scattered, affiliated colleges.

4. Female education, applied scientific and technological education, teachers' training including those for professional and vocational colleges should be extended.

In the period from 1916 to 1921 seven new universities came up at Mysore, Patna, Benaras, Aligarh, Dacca, Lucknow and Osmania.

In 1920, the Government recommended Saddler report to the provincial governments.

#### EDUCATION UNDER DYARCHY

Under Montagu-Chelmsford reforms education was shifted to provincial ministries and the Government stopped taking direct interest in educational matters, while government grants, liberally sanctioned since 1902, were now stopped. Financial difficulties prevented any substantial expansion but still education grew, especially under philanthropic efforts.

#### 298        A Brief History of Modern India

##### HARTOG COMMITTEE (1929)

An increase in number of schools and colleges had led to deterioration of education standards. A Hartog Committee was set up to report on development of education. Its main recommendations were as follows.

1. Emphasis should be given to primary education but there need be no hasty expansion or compulsion in education.

2. Only deserving students should go in for high school and intermediate stage, while average students should be diverted to vocational courses after VIII standard.

3. For improvements in standards of university education, admissions should be restricted.

##### WARDHA SCHEME OF BASIC EDUCATION (1937)

The Congress had organised a National Conference on Education in October 1937 in Wardha. In the light of the resolutions passed there, Zakir Hussain committee formulated a detailed national scheme for basic education. The main principle behind this scheme was 'learning through activity'. It was based on Gandhi's ideas published in a series of articles in the weekly Harijan. Gandhi thought that western education had created a gulf between the educated few and the masses and had also made the educated elite ineffective. The scheme had the following provisions.

(i)        Inclusion of a basic handicraft in the syllabus.

(ii) First seven years of schooling to be an integral part of a free and compulsory nationwide education system (through mother tongue).

(iii) Teaching to be in Hindi from class II to VII and in English only after class VIII.

(iv) Ways to be devised to establish contact with the community around schools through service.

(v) A suitable technique to be devised with aim to implementing the main idea of basic education—educating the child through the medium of productive activity of a suitable handicraft.

The system, rather than being a methodology for

Development of Education 299

education, was an expression of an idea for a new life and a new society. The basic premise was that only through such a scheme could India be an independent and non-violent society. This scheme was child-centred and cooperative.

There was not much development of this idea, because of the start of the Second World War and the resignation of the Congress ministries (October 1939).

#### SERGEANT PLAN OF EDUCATION

The Sergeant Plan (Sergeant was the educational advisor to the Government) was worked out by the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1944. It recommended—

1. pre-primary education for 3-6 years age group; free, universal and compulsory elementary education for 6-11 years age group; high school education for 11-17 years age group for selected children, and a university course of 3 years after higher secondary; high schools to be of two types: (i) academic and (ii) technical and vocational.
2. adequate technical, commercial and arts education.
3. abolition of intermediate course.
4. liquidation of adult illiteracy in 20 years.
5. stress on teachers' training, physical education, education for the physically and mentally handicapped.

The objective was to create within 40 years, the same level of educational attainment as prevailed in England. Although a bold and comprehensive scheme, it proposed no methodology for implementation. Also, the ideal of England's achievements may not have suited Indian conditions.

#### AFTER INDEPENDENCE

##### Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49)

The commission was set up to report on university education in the country. Its recommendations proved to be of immense significance in establishing an educational system for free India. The major recommendations were as follows.

1. There should be 12 years of pre-university educational course.

2. Higher education should have three main objectives: \* central education \* liberal education \* occupational education.
3. A university degree should not be considered essential for administrative services.
4. Rural universities with Shantiniketan and Jamia Millia as their models should be established.
5. Colleges should not be overcrowded; there should not be more than 1000 students in each college.
6. Examination standards in universities should be raised and university education should be placed in "Concurrent List".
7. A University Grants Commission should be set up to look after university education in the country.
8. English as the medium of instruction for higher studies should not be removed in haste.
9. Where federal language and mother tongue are not the same, federal language should be the medium of instruction; where federal language and mother tongue are the same, the child should take up a classical or modern Indian language.

In pursuance of these recommendations, the University Grants Commission was constituted in 1953 and given an autonomous statutory status through an Act of Parliament in 1956, with responsibilities connected with university education including determination and coordination of standards and facilities for study and research. The centre annually places at the UGC's disposal adequate funds from which grants are made to various universities, and the development schemes are implemented.

#### KOTHARI EDUCATION COMMISSION (1964-66)

The commission was set up under Dr. D.S. Kothari to advise on the national pattern of education, and was assisted by experts from the UK, USA, USSR, UNESCO. It emphasised the need for flexibility in education policy to suit changing

#### Development of Education                      301

circumstances. Based on these, a national policy was announced in 1968, which stressed on-

- free, universal and compulsory education upto the age of 14;
- a three language-formula-mother tongue, Hindi and English-and development of regional languages;
- investment of 6 per cent of national income on education; training and quality of teachers;
- development of education for agriculture and industry.

#### Recent Developments

1976 : Education placed in Concurrent List    1986: New policy on education announced.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF VERNACULAR EDUCATION

During the early 19th century vernacular education was in a sorry state of affairs. It was mostly dependent on contributions from wealthy Zamindars.

1835, 1836, 1838 : William Adam's reports on vernacular education in Bengal and Bihar pointed out defects in the system of vernacular education.

1843-53 : James Jonathan's experiments in North-West Provinces (UP), as the lieutenant-governor there, included opening one government school as model school in each tehsildari and a normal school for teachers' training for vernacular schools.

1853 : In a famous minute, Lord Dalhousie expressed strong opinion in favour of vernacular education.

1854 : Wood's Despatch made the following provisions for vernacular education:

1. Improvement of standards
  2. Supervision by government agency
  3. Normal schools to train teachers These gave impetus to the cause of vernacular education
- 1854-71: The Government paid some attention to secondary and vernacular education. The number of vernacular schools increased by more than five-fold.

## 302 A Brief History of Modern India

1882 : The Hunter Commission held that state should make special efforts for extension and improvement of vernacular education. Mass education was to be seen as instructing masses through vernaculars.

1904: Education policy put special emphasis on vernacular education and increased grants for it.

1929 : Hartog Committee presented a gloomy picture of primary education.

1937: These schools received encouragement from Congress ministries.

### DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The Engineering College at Roorkee was set up in 1847; the Calcutta College of Engineering came up in 1856. In 1858, Overseers' School at Poona was raised to the status of Poona College of Engineering and affiliated to Bombay University. Guindy College of Engineering was affiliated to Madras University.

Medical training started with establishment of a medical college in Calcutta in 1835. Lord Curzon did much to broaden the whole basis of professional courses—medicine, agriculture, engineering, veterinary sciences, etc. He established an agriculture college at Pusa which acted as a parent institution of similar institutions in other provinces.

### EVALUATION OF BRITISH POLICY ON EDUCATION

1. Even the inadequate measures the Government took for the expansion of modern education were guided by concerns other than philanthropic. The government measures for promotion of education were influenced by
  - \* agitation in favour of modern education by enlightened Indians, Christian missionaries and humanitarian officials;
  - \* the need to ensure a cheap supply of educated Indians to man an increasing number of subordinate posts in administration and in British business concerns—thus there was an emphasis on English medium as the language of administration and of education;

Development of Education 303

- \* the hope that educated Indians would help expand market for British manufactures in India;
- \* an expectation that western education would reconcile Indians to British rule, particularly as it glorified British conquerors and their administration.

The British thus wanted to use modern education to strengthen the foundations of their political authority in India.

2. Traditional system of Indian learning gradually declined for want of support, and specially after 1844 when it was declared that applicants for government employment should possess knowledge of English.
3. Mass education was neglected leading to widespread illiteracy (1911-84 per cent and in 1921-92 per cent) which created a wide linguistic and cultural gulf between the educated few and the masses.
4. Since education was to be paid for, it became a monopoly of upper and richer classes and city dwellers.
5. There was an almost total neglect of women's education because
  - (i) the Government did not want to arouse wrath of orthodox sections; and
  - (ii) it had no immediate utility for the colonial rule.
6. Scientific and technical education was by and large neglected. By 1857 there were only three medical colleges at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and only one good engineering college at Roorkee which was open only to Europeans and Eurasians.

304 Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule

## CHAPTER 11

Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule

### BRITISH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL POLICY IN INDIA

Till 1813, the British followed a policy of non-interference in social, religious and cultural life of the country. After 1813, measures were taken to transform Indian society and its cultural environs because of the emergence of new interests and ideas in Britain of the nineteenth century in the wake of significant changes in Europe during the 18th and the 19th centuries. Some of these changes were—

- (i) Industrial Revolution which began in the 18th century and resulted in the growth of industrial capitalism. The rising industrial interests wanted to make India a big market for their goods and therefore required partial modernisation and transformation of Indian society.
- (ii) Intellectual Revolution which gave rise to new attitudes of mind, manners, and morals.
  - (ii) French Revolution which with its message of liberty, equality and fraternity, unleashed the forces of democracy and nationalism.



The new trend was represented by Bacon, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Adam Smith and Bentham in thought and by Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Charles Dickens in literature.

#### Characteristics of New Thought

Some of the characteristics of the new wave of thought were—

- (i) Rationalism which advocated faith in reason and a scientific attitude.

#### Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule 305

(ii) Humanism which advocated love of man—the belief that every man is an end in himself and should be respected and prized as such. No man has a right to look upon another man as a mere agent of his happiness. These ideals gave rise to liberalism, socialism and individualism

(iii) Doctrine of Progress according to which nothing is static and all societies must change with time. Man has the capacity to remodel nature and society on just and rational lines.

#### Schools of Thought

These new currents of thought caused conflicts among administrators and produced different schools of thought:

##### Conservatives

They advocated introduction of as few changes as possible. Indian civilisation, they felt, was different from the European one but not necessarily inferior to it. Many of these thinkers respected Indian philosophy and culture. If at all, Western ideas and practices were to be introduced gradually and cautiously. Social stability was a must, they felt. Early representatives of this school of thought were Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke and later ones included Munro, Metcalfe, and Elphinstone. The Conservatives remained influential throughout and most of the British officials in India were generally of a conservative persuasion.

##### Paternalistic Imperialists

They became influential especially after 1800. They were sharply critical of Indian society and culture and used to justify economic and political enslavement of India.

##### Radicals

They went beyond the narrow criticism and imperialistic outlook of the Conservatives and the Imperialists and applied advanced humanistic and rational thought to the Indian situation. They thought that India had the capacity to improve and that they must help the country do that. They wanted to make India a part of the modern progressive world of science and humanism and therefore advocated the introduction of modern western science, philosophy and

#### 306 A Brief History of Modern India

literature. Some of the British officials who came to India after 1820 were Radicals. They were strongly supported by Raja Rammohan Roy and other like-minded reformers.

But predominantly, the ruling elements in the British Indian administration continued to be imperialistic and exploitative. They thought that the modernisation of India had to occur within broad limits imposed by the needs of an easier and more thorough exploitation of its resources. In this respect, often the Radicals also towed a conservative line. They desired most of all the safety and perpetuation of the British rule in India; every other consideration was secondary.

#### Dilemma Before the Government

The Government feared that too much modernisation might generate forces hostile to their interests; thus it was thought to be appropriate to opt for partial modernisation—introducing it in some respects and blocking it in others, in other words, a 'colonial modernization

#### Role of Christian Missionaries

The missionaries regarded Christianity to be a superior religion and wanted to spread it in India through 'westernisation' which, they believed, would destroy the faith of the natives in their own religion and culture. Towards this end, the Christian missionaries

- supported the Radicals whose scientific approach, they believed, would undermine the native culture and beliefs.

- supported the Imperialists since law and order and the British supremacy were essential for their propaganda.

- sought business and the capitalist support holding out the hope to them that the Christian converts would be better customers of their goods.

After 1858, however, the policy of hesitant modernisation was abandoned, since the Indians proved to be apt pupils and shifted rapidly towards modernisation of their society and assertion of their culture and demanded a rule in accordance with the modern principles of liberty, equality and justice.

#### Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule 307

Now, the British came to side with the socially orthodox and conservative elements of society. They also encouraged casteism and communalism.

[For the humanitarian measures undertaken during the British rule and after independence, refer to the chapter "Religious and Social Reform Movements".]

#### CIVIL SERVICES

Cornwallis (governor-general, 1786-93) was the first to bring into existence and organise the civil services. He tried to check corruption through

- \* raising salary,
- \* strict enforcement of rules against private trade,
- \* debarring civil servants from taking presents, bribes etc,
- \* enforcing promotions through seniority.

In 1800, Wellesley (governor-general, 1798-1805) set up the Fort William College for training of new recruits. In 1806 Wellesley's college was disapproved by the Court of Directors and instead the East India College

was set up at Haileybury in England to impart two years' training to the recruits.

Charter Act of 1853

This Act ended the Company's patronage, enjoining recruitment to be through an open competition henceforth.

The Indians, however, were barred from high posts from the 'very beginning. Cornwallis thought, "Every native of Hindustan is corrupt."

The Charter Act of 1793 had reserved all posts worth 500 pounds per annum for the covenanted servants of the Company. The reasons for exclusion of Indians were—

- the belief that only the English could establish administrative services serving British interests.
- the belief that the Indians were incapable, untrustworthy and insensitive to the British interests.
- the fact there was high competition among the Europeans themselves for lucrative posts, so why offer them to the Indians.

### 308 A Brief History of Modern India

Although the Charter Act of 1833 theoretically threw open the services to the Indians, the relevant provisions were never really implemented. After 1857, when the Indians claimed a share in higher services, the Proclamation of 1858 declared the British intention of including the Indians, freely and impartially, in offices under the civil service.

Indian Civil Service Act, 1861

This Act reserved certain offices for covenanted civil servants but the examination was held in England in English language, based on classical learning of Greek and Latin. The maximum permissible age was gradually reduced from 23 (in 1859) to 22 (in 1860) to 21 (in 1866) and to 19 (1878).

In 1863, Satyendra Nath Tagore became the first Indian to qualify for the Indian Civil Service.

In 1878-79, Lytton introduced the Statutory Civil Service consisting of one-sixth of covenanted posts to be filled by Indians of high families through nominations by local governments subject to approval by the secretary and the viceroy. But, the system failed and was abolished.

The Indian National Congress Demand

The INC raised the demand, after it was set up in 1885, for

- lowering of age limit for recruitment-. And
- holding the examination simultaneously in India and Britain.

Aitchison Committee on Public Services (1886) Set up by Dufferin, the committee recommended—

- dropping of the terms 'covenanted' and 'uncovenanted';
- classification of the civil service into Imperial Indian Civil Service (examination in England), Provincial Civil Service (examination in India) and Subordinate Civil Service (examination in India); and,
- raising the age limit to 23.

In 1893, the House of Commons in England passed a resolution supporting holding of simultaneous examination in India and England; but the resolution was never implemented.

Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule 309

Kimberle, the secretary of state, said, "It is indispensable that an adequate number of members of civil service shall always be Europeans.

Montford Reforms (1919) These reforms— stated a realistic policy—"If a responsible government is to be established in India, the more Indians we can employ in public service, the better.

- recommended holding of simultaneous examination in India and England.
- recommended that one-third of recruitments be made in India itself—to be raised annually by 1.5 per cent.

Lee Commission (1924) The commission recommended that—

- the secretary of state should continue to recruit the ICS, the Irrigation branch of the Service of Engineers, the Indian Forest Service, etc.;
- the recruitments for the transferred fields like education and civil medical service be made by provincial governments;
- direct recruitment to ICS on basis of 50:50 parity between the Europeans and the Indians be reached in 15 years;
- a Public Service Commission be immediately established (as laid down in the Government of India Act, 1919).

Government of India Act, 1935, The Act recommended the establishment of a Federal Public Service Commission and Provincial Public Service Commission under their spheres. But the positions of control and authority remained in British hands and the process of Indianisation of the civil service did not put effective political power in Indian hands since the Indian bureaucrats acted as the agents of colonial rule.

#### POLICE

1791 Cornwallis organised a regular police force to maintain law and order by going back to and modernising the old Indian system of thanas (circles) in a district under a

310 A Brief History of Modern India

daroga (an Indian) and a superintendent of police (SP) at the head of a district. He relieved the zamindars of their police duties.

1808 Mayo appointed an SP for each division helped by a number of spies (goondas) but these spies committed depredations on local people. 1814 By an order of the Court of Directors, the appointment of darogas and their subordinates was abolished in all possessions of the Company except in Bengal.

Bentinck (governor-general, 1828-35) abolished the office of the SP. The collector/magistrate was now to head the police force in his jurisdiction and the commissioner in each division was to act as the SP. This arrangement resulted in a badly organised police force, putting a

heavy burden on the collector/ magistrate. Presidency towns were the first to have the duties of collector/magistrate separated.

The recommendations of the Police Commission (1860) led to the Indian Police Act, 1861. The commission recommended

\* a system of civil constabulary—maintaining the village set-up in the present form (a village watchman maintained by the village) but in direct relationship with the rest of the constabulary. inspector-general as the head in a province, deputy inspector-general as the head in a range, and SP as the head in a district.

The police gradually succeeded in curbing criminal acts, such as dacoity, thuggee, etc. But, while dealing with the public, the attitude of the police was unsympathetic. The police was also used to suppress the national movement.

The British did not create an All-India Police. The Police Act, 1861 presented the guidelines for a police set-up in the provinces. The ranks were uniformly introduced all over the country.

1902 The Police Commission recommended the

Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule 311

establishment of CID (Criminal Investigation Department) in the provinces and a Central Intelligence Bureau at the centre.

#### JUDICIARY

Earlier, the administration of justice used to be under the zamindars and the process of dispensing justice was often arbitrary. Reforms under Warren Hastings (1772-1785)

- District Diwani Adalats were established in districts to try civil disputes. These adalats were placed under the collector and had Hindu law applicable for Hindus and the Muslim law for Muslims. The appeal from District Diwani Adalats lay to the Sadar Diwani Adalat which functioned under a president and two members of the Supreme Council.
- District Fauzdari Adalats were set up to try criminal disputes and were placed under an Indian officer assisted by qazis and muftis. These adalats also were under the general supervision of the collector. Muslim law was administered in Fauzdari Adalats. The approval for capital punishment and for acquisition of property lay to the Sadar Nizamat Adalat at Murshidabad which was headed by a deputy nizam (an Indian Muslim) assisted by chief qazi and chief mufti.
- Under the Regulating Act of 1773, a Supreme Court was established at Calcutta which was competent to try all British subjects within Calcutta and the subordinate factories, including Indians and Europeans. It had original and appellate jurisdictions. Often, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court clashed with that of other courts. Reforms under Cornwallis (1786-1793)
- The District Fauzdari Courts were abolished and, instead, circuit courts were established at Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. These circuit courts had European judges and were to act as courts of appeal for both civil and criminal cases. The Sadar Nizamat Adalat was shifted to Calcutta and

### 312 A Brief History of Modern India

was put under the governor-general and members, of the Supreme Council assisted by the chief qazi and the chief mufti.

- The District Diwani Adalat was now designated as the District, City or the Zilla Court and, placed under a district judge. The collector was now responsible only for the revenue administration with no magisterial functions.
- A gradation of civil courts was established (for both Hindu and Muslim laws)–
  - (i) Munsiff's Court under Indian officers,
  - (ii) Registrar's Court under a European judge,
  - (iii) District Court under the district judge,
  - (iv) Four Circuit Courts as provincial courts of appeal,
  - (iv) Sadar Diwani Adalat at Calcutta, and
  - (vi) King-in-Council for appeals of 5000 pounds and above.
- The Cornwallis Code was laid out- There was a separation of revenue and justice administration.
- European subjects were also brought under jurisdiction.
- Government subjects were answerable to the civil courts for actions done in their official capacity.
- The principle of sovereignty of law was established.

#### Reforms under William Bentinck (1828-1833)

- The four Circuit Courts were abolished and their functions transferred to collectors under the supervision of the commissioner of revenue and circuit. Sadar Diwani Adalat and a Sadar Nizamat Adalat were set up at Allahabad for the convenience of the people of Upper Provinces.
- Till now, Persian was the official language in courts. Now, the suitor had the option to use Persian or a vernacular language, while in the Supreme Court English language laced Persian.

1833: A Law Commission was set up under Macaulay for codification of Indian laws. As a result, a Civil Procedure

#### Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule 313

Code (1859), an Indian Penal Code (1860) and a Criminal. Procedure Code (1861) were prepared.

1860 It was provided that the Europeans can claim no special privileges except in criminal cases, and no judge of an Indian origin could try them.

1865 : The Supreme Court and the Sadar Adalats were merged into three High Courts at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.

1935 The Government of India Act provided for a Federal Court (set up in 1937) which could settle disputes between governments and could hear limited appeals from the High Courts.

#### Positive Aspects of Judiciary under the British

- The rule of law was established.

- The codified laws replaced the religious and personal laws of the rulers.
- Even European subjects were brought under the jurisdiction, although in criminal cases, they could be tried by European judges only.
- Government servants were made answerable, to the civil courts.

#### The Negative Aspects

- The judicial system became more and more complicated and expensive. The rich could manipulate the system. There was ample scope for false evidence, deceit and chicanery.
- ▪ Dragged out litigation meant delayed justice. Courts became overburdened as litigation increased. Often, the European judges were not familiar with the Indian usage and traditions.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTITUTION FROM 1773 TO 1858

After the Battle of Buxar (1764), the East India Company got the Diwani (right to collect revenue) of Bengal, Bihar and

#### 314 A Brief History of Modern India

Orissa. An annual subsidy was to be paid to the Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam II, and an annual pension to the Nawab of Awadh, Shuja-ud-Daula. The Company appointed two Indians as the deputy diwans—Mohammad Reza Khan for Bengal and Raja Shitab Rai for Bihar.

1767 The first intervention in Indian affairs by the British Government came in 1767. It demanded 10 per cent share in the plunder amounting to 4 million pounds annually.

1765-72 The dual system of government where the Company had the authority but no responsibility and its Indian representative\$ had all the responsibility but no authority continued for seven years. This period was characterised by—

- \* rampant corruption among servants of the Company who made full use of private trading to enrich themselves;
- \* excessive revenue collection and oppression of peasantry;
- \* the Company's bankruptcy, while the servants were flourishing.

In the meantime, the British GoVernmerit decided to bring some order into the Company''s affairs. This included the following: The Regulating Act of 1773 The directors of the Company were required to submit all correspondence regarding revenue affairs and civil and military • administration to the Government. (Thus for the first time, the British cabinet was given the right to exercise control over Indian affairs.) In Bengal, the administration was to be carried out by governor-general and a council consisting of 4 members, representing civil and military government They were required to function according to the majority rule. Warren Hastings and four others were named in the Act, later ones were to be appointed by the Company. A Supreme Court of judicature was to be established in Bengal with original and appellate jurisdictions where all

#### Brief Notes on Some Aspects of British Rule 315

subjects could seek redressal. In practice, however, the Supreme Court had a debatable jurisdiction vis-a-vis the council which created various problems. The governor-general could exercise some powers over Bombay and Madras—again, a vague provision which created many problems. The whole scheme was based on checks and balances.

Amendments (1781)

- The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was defined—within Calcutta, it was to administer the personal law of the defendant.
- The servants of the Government were immune if they did anything while discharging their duties.
- Social and religious usages of the subjects were to be honoured.

Pitt's India Act of 1784

- The Government's control over the Company's affairs was greatly extended. A Board of Control consisting of the chancellor of exchequer, a secretary of state and four members of the Privy Council (to be appointed by the Crown) were to exercise control over the Company's civil, military, and revenue affairs. All dispatches were to be approved by the board. Thus a dual system of control was set up. In India, the governor-general was to have a council of three (including the commander-in-chief), and the presidencies of Bombay and Madras were made subordinate to the governor-general.
- A general prohibition was placed on aggressive wars and treaties (breached often).

The Act of 1786

Cornwallis was allowed to override, the council's decision in if he owned the responsibility for the decision.

Later, this provision was extended to all the governor general.

The Charter Act of 1793

- The Home Government members were to be paid out of Indian revenues.

316        A Brief History of Modern India

The Charter Act of 1813

In England, the business interests were pressing for an end to the Company's monopoly over trade in India because of a spirit of laissez-faire and the continental system by Napoleon by which the European ports were closed to Britain. The 1813 Act sought to redress these grievances

- The Company's monopoly over trade in India ended, but the Company retained the trade with China and the trade in tea.
- The Company's shareholders were given a 10.5 per cent dividend on the revenue of India.
- The Company was to retain the possession of territories and the revenue for 20 years more, without prejudice to the sovereignty of the Crown. (Thus, the constitutional position of the British territories in India was defined explicitly for the first time.)
- Powers of the Board of Control were further enlarged.
- A sum of one lakh rupees was to be set aside for the revival, promotion and encouragement of literature, learning and science among



the natives of India, every year. (This was an important statement from the point of state's responsibility for education.)

The Charter Act of 1833

- The Company's monopoly over trade with China and In tea also ended.
- The lease of 20 years to the Company was further extended. Territories of India were to be, governed in the name of the Crown.
- All restrictions on European immigration and the acquisition of property in India were lifted. Thus, the way was paved for the wholesale European colonisation of India.
- In India, a financial, legislative and administrative centralisation of the Government was envisaged:
  - The governor-general was given the power to superintend, control and direct all civil and military affairs of the Company.

Brief Notes on Some Aspects, of British Rule 317

- Bengal, Madras, Bombay and all other territories were placed under complete control of the governor-general.
- All revenues were to be raised under the authority of the governor-general who would have complete control over the expenditure too.
- The Governments of Madras and Bombay were drastically deprived of their legislative powers and left with a right of proposing to the governor-general the projects of law which they thought to be expedient.
- A law member was added to the governor-general's council for professional advice on law-making.
- Indian laws were to be codified and consolidated. No Indian citizen was to be denied employment under the Company on the basis of religion, colour, birth, descent, etc. (Although the reality was different, this declaration formed the sheet-anchor of political agitation in India.)
- The administration was urged to take steps to ameliorate the conditions of slaves and to ultimately abolish slavery. (Slavery was abolished in 1843.)

The Charter Act of 1853

- The Company was to continue possession of territories unless the Parliament provided otherwise.
- The strength of the Court of Directors was reduced to 18.
- The Company's patronage over the services was dissolved—the services were now thrown open to a competitive examination.
- The law member became the full member of the governor-general's executive council.
- Six members were to be added to the executive council while legislating but the executive council retained the veto over the Legislative Council.

The Act for Better Government of India, 1858

The 1857 revolt had exposed the Company's limitations in administering under a complex situation. Till then, there had

318 A Brief History of Modern India

not been much accountability. The 1858 Act sought to rectify this anomaly

\* India was to be governed by and in the name of the Crown through a secretary of state and a council of 15. The initiative and the final decision was to be with the secretary of state and the council was to be, just advisory in nature. (Thus, the dual system introduced by the Pitt's India Act came to an end.)

- Governor-general became the viceroy (his prestige, if not authority, increased).

The assumption of power by the Crown was one of formality rather than substance. It gave a decent burial to an already-dead horse—the Company's administration.

[For constitutional development from 1861 onwards refer to relevant chapters on, freedom struggle.]

## CHAPTER 12

### The Indian States

The princely states, which covered, a total area of 7,12,508 square miles and numbered no fewer than 562, included tiny states such as. Bilbari with a population of 27 persons only and some big ones like Hyderabad (as large as Italy) with a population of 14 million. The East India Company acquired, in the process of conquest, important coastal tracts, the valleys of the great navigable rivers and such tracts which were rich in agricultural products and densely populated by prosperous people, while, generally, the Indian states were "the inaccessible and less fertile tracts of the Indian peninsula".

The making of Indian states was >largely governed by the same circumstances which led to the growth of. East India Company's power in India. The evolution of relations between the British authority and states can be traced under the following broad stages

#### I. EAST INDIA COMPANY'S STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY WITH INDIAN STATES FROM A POSITION OF SUBORDINATION (1740-1765)

Starting with Anglo-French rivalry with the coming of Dupleix in 1751, the East India Company asserted political identity with capture of Arcot (1751). With the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company acquired political power next only to the Bengal Nawabs. In 1765 with the acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the East India Company became a significant political power.

#### II. POLICY OF RING FENCE (1765-1813)

This policy was reflected in Warren Hastings' wars against the Marathas and Mysore, and aimed at creating buffer zones to defend the Company's frontiers. The main threat was

319

320 A Brief History of Modern India

from the Marathas and Afghan invaders (the Company undertook to organise Awadh's defence to safeguard Bengal's security). Wellesley's policy of subsidiary alliance was an extension of ring fence—which sought to reduce states to a position of dependence on British Government in India. Major powers such as Hyderabad, Awadh and the Marathas accepted subsidiary alliance. Thus, British supremacy was established.

### III. POLICY OF SUBORDINATE ISOLATION (1813-1857)

Now, the imperial idea grew and the theory of paramountcy began to develop—Indian states were supposed to act in subordinate cooperation with the British Government and acknowledge its supremacy. States surrendered all forms of external sovereignty and retained full sovereignty in internal administration. British Residents were transformed from diplomatic agents of a foreign power to executive and controlling officers of a superior government.

In 1833, the Charter Act ended the Company's commercial functions while it retained political functions. It adopted the practice of insisting on prior approval/sanction for all matters of succession. In 1834, the Board of Directors issued guidelines to annex states wherever and whenever possible. This policy of annexation culminated in usurpation of six states by Dalhousie including some big states such as Satara and Nagpur.

### IV. POLICY OF SUBORDINATE UNION (1857-1935)

The year 1858 saw the assumption of direct responsibility by the Crown. Because of the states' loyalty during the 1857 revolt and their potential use as breakwaters in political storms of the future, the policy of annexation was abandoned. The new policy was to punish or depose but not to annex. After 1858, the fiction of authority of the Mughal emperor ended; sanction for all matters of succession was required from the Crown since the Crown stood forth as the unquestioned ruler and the paramount power. Now the ruler inherited the gaddi not as a matter of right but as a gift from the paramount power, because the fiction of Indian states standing in a status

### The Indian States 321

of equality with the Crown as independent, sovereign states ended with the Queen adopting the title of "Kaiser-i-Hind" (Queen Empress of India). The paramount supremacy of the Crown presupposed and implied the subordination of states. The British Government exercised the right to interfere in the internal spheres of states—partly in the interest of the princes, partly in the interest of people's welfare, partly, to secure proper conditions for British subjects and foreigners and partly in the interest of the whole of India.

The British Government was further helped in this encroachment by modern developments in communication—railways, roads, telegraph, canals, post offices, press and public opinion. The Government of India exercised complete and undisputed control in international affairs—it could declare war, peace or neutrality for states. According to the Butler Commission in 1927, "For the purpose of international relations, state"

territory is in the same position as British territory and state subjects in the same position as British subjects."

#### Curzon's Approach

Curzon stretched the interpretation of old treaties to mean that the princes, in their capacity as servants of people, were supposed to work side-by-side with the governor-general in the scheme of Indian Government. He adopted a policy of patronage and "intrusive surveillance". He thought the relation between the states and Government was neither feudal nor federal, a type not based on a treaty but consisting of a series of relationships having grown under different historical conditions that, in the course of time, gradually conformed to a single line.

The new trend seemed to reduce all states to a single type—uniformly dependent on the British Government and considered as an integral part of Indian political system.

Post-1905, A policy of cordial cooperation began to counter progressive and revolutionary developments in face of large-scale political unrests.

According to the recommendations of Montford Reforms (1921), a Chamber of Princes (Narendra Mandal) was set up as a consultative and advisory body having no say in the

#### 322 A Brief History of Modern India

internal affairs of individual states and having no powers to discuss matters concerning existing rights and freedoms. For the purpose of the chamber the Indian states were divided into three categories

1. Directly represented-109
2. Represented through representatives-127
3. Recognised as feudal holdings or jagirs.

The question of extent of sovereignty and paramountcy was still undefined. The Butler Committee (1927) was set up to examine the nature of relationship between the states and Government. It gave the following recommendations

1. Paramountcy must remain supreme and must fulfil its obligations, adopting and defining itself according to the shifting necessities of time and progressive development of states.
2. States should not be handed over to an Indian Government in British India, responsible to an Indian legislature, without the consent of states.

Thus, "paramountcy" was left undefined and this hydraheaded creature was left to feed on usage, Crown's prerogative and the princes' implied consent.

#### V. POLICY OF EQUAL FEDERATION (1935-1947)

The Government of India Act, 1935 proposed a Federal Assembly with 125 out of 375 seats for the princes and the Council of States with 104 out of 160 seats for, the princes, under its scheme of an all-India federation, which was subject to ratification by states representing

more than half of the population and entitled to more than half of the seats in the Council of States.

This scheme never came into existence and after the outbreak of World War II (September 1939) it was dropped altogether.

#### VI. INTEGRATION AND MERGER

After World War II began and a position of noncooperation was adopted by the Congress, the British Government tried to break the deadlock through the Cripps

The Indian States 323

Mission (1942), Wavell Plan (1945), Cabinet Mission (1946) and Attlee's statement (February 1947).

Cripps held that the British Government did not contemplate transferring paramountcy of Crown to any other party in India. The states tried various schemes to forge a union of their own, envisaging themselves as sovereign in status or as a third force in the Indian political scene. The June 3rd Plan and Attlee's statement made it clear that the states were free to join either of the two dominions, and Mountbatten refused to give a sovereign status to the states.

Sardar Patel, who was in charge of states' ministry in the interim cabinet, helped by V.P. Menon, the secretary in the ministry, appealed to the patriotic feeling of rulers to join the Indian dominion in matters of defence, communication and external affairs—the three areas which had been part of the paramountcy of the Crown and over which the states had anyway no control. By August 15, 1947, 136 states had joined the Indian Union but others remained precariously outside

1. Junagarh, The Muslim Nawab wanted to join Pakistan but a Hindu population wanted to join Indian Union. In the face of repressive attitude of the Nawab, there was a plebiscite, which decided in favour of India.
2. Hyderabad, Hyderabad wanted a sovereign status. It signed a Standstill Agreement with India in November 1947. Indian troops withdrew and the Nizam's police and stormtroopers (Razakars) took over. The Nizam wanted an outlet to the sea (Goa). The violence and supply of foreign arms promoted Indian troops to move in again in 1948—described as "a police action to restore law and order". Hyderabad acceded in November 1949.
3. Kashmir The state of Jammu and Kashmir had a Hindu prince and a Muslim majority population. The prince envisaged a sovereign status for the state and was reluctant to accede to either of the dominions. As he procrastinated, the newly established state of Pakistan sent its forces behind a front of tribal militia and moved menacingly towards Srinagar. It was now that the prince was forced to sign an Instrument of Accession (October 1947) with the Indian Union,

324 A Brief History of Modern India

## CHAPTER 13

Jammu and Kashmir was a popular leader Sheikh Abdullah.

Troops were despatched to defend the state against the raiders.

Many complaints to the UN Security Council regarding raids from Pakistan and the final status of the state through a plebiscite led to a ceasefire. 10,000 square Km or area under Pakistani occupation.

The special status of Jammu and Kashmir

under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which implied a former Indian Union over the state as

transparent to other states.

The problem now was two-folds,

- (i) of transforming the states into viable administrative
- (ii) of absorbing them into the constitutional units. This was sought to be solved by:
  1. incorporating smaller states (216 such states) into contiguous provinces and listed in Part A. For instance, 39 states of Orissa and Chhattisgarh were incorporated into Central Provinces, Orissa. Gujarat states were incorporated into Bombay;
  2. making some states as centrally administered for strategic or special reasons, listed in Part-C (61 states)—Himachal Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Bhopal, etc.;
  3. creating five unions—United States of Kathiawar, United States of Matsya, Patiala and East Punjab. States Union, Rajasthan and United States of Travancore-Cochin (later Kerala).

Initially these states acceded with respect to defence, communication, external affairs; later they felt that a closer association was necessary. The five unions and Mysore accepted Indian jurisdiction in Union, concurrent subjects except taxation and subject to differences as under Article 238 and the supervisory power of Union for ten years.

The Seventh Amendment (1956) abolished Part-B states as a class, and formed one class out of Parts A and B; thus special provisions relating to Part B states were deleted.

'The Indian states thus lost their identity and became part of one uniform political set-up.

Civil Rebellions and Tribal Uprisings-1757-1900

BENGAL AND EASTERN INDIA

The Sanyasi Revolt, The coming of the British brought with it economic hardships symbolised by the massive famine of 1770, and a general callousness on the part of the Company's stooges. The restrictions

imposed on visits to holy places estranged the sanyasis. The sanyasis retaliated by organising raids on the Company's factories and state treasuries. Only of er prolonged military action could Warren Hastings contain the raids by the sanyasis.

Chuar Uprising  
Famine, enhanced land revenue demands and economic distress goaded the Chuar aboriginal tribesmen of Midnapore district to take up arms. The uprising lasted from 1766 to 1772 and then, again surfaced between 1795 and 1816.

Ho Rising  
The Ho and Munda tribesmen of Chhotanagpur challenged the Company's forces in 1820-22, 'then again in 1831, and the area remained disturbed till 1837.

Kol Mutiny (1831)  
This covered and of The trouble started with large-scale transfers of land from Kol headmen (Mundas) to outsiders like Sikh and Muslim farmers. The Kols of Chhotanagpur resented this and in 1831, the Kol rebels killed or burnt about a thousand outsiders. Only after large-scale military operations could order be restored.

Kandh Uprising (1837-56)  
This covered Ghumsar, Chinaki-Medi, Kalahandi and Patna. The Kandhs retaliated under Chakra Bisoi against the British efforts to put an end to the Kandh's practice of human sacrifice (mariah) first through

325

326 A Brief History of Modern India

persuasion and later through force. The Kandhs fought with tangis—a sort of battle axe—bows and arrows and even swords.

Santhal Rising  
The Santhals of Rajmahal Hills resented the oppression by revenue officials, police, money-lenders, landlords—in general, by the 'outsiders' (whom they called diku). The Santhals under Sido and Kanhu rose up against their oppressors, declared the end of the Company's rule and asserted themselves independent in 1854. It was only in 1856 after' extensive military operations that the situation was brought under control. Sido died in 1855, while Kanhu was arrested in 1866. A separate district of Santhal Pargana!, was created by the Government to pacify the Santhals.

Ahom Revolt  
The British had pledged to withdraw after the First Burma War (1824-26) from Assam. But, after the war, instead of withdrawing, the British attempted to incorporate the Ahoms' territories in the Company's dominion. This sparked off a rebellion in 1828 under the leadership of Gombard Konwar. Finally, the Company decided to follow a conciliatory policy and handed over Upper Assam to Maharaja Purandar Singh Narendra and part of the kingdom was restored to the Assamese king.

Khasi Uprising  
After having occupied the hilly region between Garo and Jaintia Hills, the East India Company wanted to build a road linking the Brahmaputra Valley with Sylhet. For this, a large number of outsiders including Englishmen, Bengalis and the labourers from the plains were

brought to these regions. The Khasis, Garos, Khamptis and the Singphos organised themselves under to drive away the strangers from the plains. The uprising developed into a popular revolt against British rule in the area. By 1833, the superior English military force had suppressed the revolt.

Pagal Panthis Karam Shah was the founder of the Pagal Panth—a semi-religious sect having influence in the northern districts of Bengal. An activist fervour to the sect was imparted by Tipu, the son and successor of Karam Shah. Tipu was

#### Civil Rebellions and Tribal Uprisings 1757-1900 327

motivated by both religious and political motives and took up the cause of the tenants against the oppression of the zamindars. Tipu captured Sherpur in 1825 and assumed royal power. The insurgents extended their activities to Garo Hills. The area remained disturbed in the 1830s and 1840s.

**Faraizi Revolt** The Faraizis were the followers of a Muslim sect founded by Haji Shariat-Allah of Faridpur in Eastern Bengal. They advocated radical religious, social and political changes. Shariat-Allah son Dadu Mian (1819-60) organised his followers with an aim to expel the English intruders from Bengal. The sect also supported the cause of the tenants against the zamindars. The Faraizi disturbances continued from 1838 to 1857. Most of the Faraizis joined the Wahabi ranks.

**Munda Revolt** For over three decades, the Munda sardars of Chhotanagpur had been struggling against the destruction of their system of common land-holdings by the intrusion of jagirdars, thikadars (revenue farmers) and traders moneylenders. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Mundas rose under Birsa Munda in a religious movement or rebellion ("ulgulan") with an agrarian and political content. They aimed to establish a Munda rule in the land by killing thikadars, jagirdars, rajas and halcims. To bring about the liberation, Birsa gathered a force of 6,000 Mundas armed with swords, spears, battle-axes, and bows and arrows. Birsa was, however, captured in 1900 and he died in jail the same year.

#### WESTERN INDIA

**Bhil Uprisings**, The Bhils, an aboriginal tribe concentrated around Khandesh, revolted against their new masters, the East India Company, fearing agrarian hardships and the worst under the new regime. One of their leaders was Sewaram. The Bhils revolted in 1817-19, and again in 1825, 1836 and 1846.

**Cutch Rebellion** The British interfered in the internal feuds of the Cutch and, in 1819, defeated and deposed the

#### 328 A Brief History of Modern India

Cutch ruler Rao Bharamal in favour of his infant. A British resident governed the areas as the de facto ruler with the help of a regency



council. The administrative innovations made by the regency council coupled with excessive land assessment caused deep resentment. The news of the British reverses in the Burma War emboldened the chiefs to rise in revolt and demand the restoration of Bharamal. After extensive military operations failed to control the situation, the Company's authorities were compelled to follow a conciliatory policy.

Waghera Rising, A resentment against the alien rule coupled with the exactions of the Gaekwar of Baroda supported by the British Government compelled the Waghera chiefs of Okha Mandal to take up arms. The Wagheras carried out inroads into British territory during 1818-19. A peace treaty was signed in November 1820.

Koli Risings, The Kolis living in the neighbourhood of Bhils rose up in rebellion against the Company's rule in 1829, 1839 and again during 1844-48. They resented the imposition of Company's rule which brought with it large-scale unemployment for them and the dismantling of their forts.

Ramosi Risings, The Ramosis, the hill tribes of the Western Ghats, had not reconciled to British rule and the British pattern of administration. They rose under Chittur Singh in 1822 and plundered the country around Satara. Again, there were eruptions in 1825-26 and the disturbances continued till 1829.

The disturbance occurred again in 1839 over deposition and deposition of Raja Pratap Singh of Satara, and disturbances in 1840-41 also. Finally, a superior British force imposed order in the area.

Surat Salt Agitations A strong anti-British sentiment in attacks by local Surat population on the Europeans 1844 over the issue of the Government's step to raise the salt duty from 50 paise to one rupee. Faced with a popular movement, the Government withdrew the additional salt levy. And, again in 1848, the Government was forced to withdraw

Civil Rebellions and Tribal Uprisings-1757-1900 329

its measure to introduce Bengal Standard Weights and Measures in face of people's determined bid to resort to boycott and passive resistance.

Kolhapur and Savantvadi Revolts The Gadkaris were a hereditary military class which was garrisoned in the Maratha forts. These garrisons were disbanded during administrative reorganisation in Kolhapur state after 1844. Facing the spectre of unemployment, the Gadkaris rose in revolt and occupied the Samangarh and Bhudargarh forts. Similarly, the simmering discontent caused a revolt in Savantvadi areas.

#### SOUTH INDIA

Revolt of Raja of Vizianagaram, The East India Company invited the wrath of the people of Northern Sarkar when, after the acquisition of these territories in 1765, it demanded a tribute of three lakh rupees from the Raja and also asked the Raja to disband his troops. The Raja supported by his subjects rose up in revolt. The Raja died in a battle in 1794.

Finally, the Company offered the estate to the deceased Raja's son and reduced the demand for presents.

Poligars' Revolt, The Poligars of Dindigal and Malabar rose up against the oppressive land revenue system under the British rule using 1801-06. Sporadic rising of the Poligars in Madras Presidency continued till 1856.

Diwan Velu Tampi's Revolt The East India Company's harsh conditions imposed on the state of Travancore, after both of them agreed to a subsidiary alliance arrangement under Wellesley in 1805, caused deep resentment. The ruler failed to pay the subsidy and fell in arrears. The high-handed attitude of the Company compelled the Diwan, Velu Tampi, to rise against the Company, assisted by the Nair battalion. A large military operation had to be undertaken to restore peace.

Rampa Revolt, The hill tribesmen of Rampa in coastal Andhra revolted in March 1879 against the depredations of

### 330 A Brief History of Modern India

the government-supported mansabdar and the new restrictive forest regulations. Only after a large military operation could the rebels be defeated in 1880.

#### NORTH INDIA

Wahabi Movement, The Wahabi Movement was essentially an Islamic revivalist movement founded by Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly who was inspired by the teachings of Abdul Wahab (1703-87) of Saudi Arabia and Shah Waliullah of Delhi. Syed Ahmed condemned the western influence on Islam and advocated a return to pure Islam and, society as it was in the Arabia of the Prophet's time

Syed Ahmed was acclaimed as the desired leader (Imam). A countrywide organisation with an elaborate secret code for its working under spiritual vice-regents (Khalifas) was set up, and Sithana in north-western tribal belt was chosen as a base for operations. In India, its important centre was at Patna though it had its missions in Hyderabad, Madras, Bengal, UP and Bombay. Since Dar-ul-Harb (the land of kafirs) was to be converted into Dar-ul-Islam (the land of Islam), a jihad was declared against the Sikh kingdom of the Punjab. After the defeat of the Sikh ruler and incorporation of the Punjab into the East India Company's dominion in 1849, the English dominion in India became the sole target of the Wahabis' attacks.

The Wahabis played an important role in spreading anti-British sentiments. A series of military operations by the British in the 1860s on the Wahabi base in Sithana and various court cases of sedition on the Wahabis weakened the Wahabi resistance, although sporadic encounters with the authorities continued into the 1880s and 1890s.

Kuka Revolt, The Kuka Movement was founded in 1840 by Bhagat Jawahar Mal (also called Sian Saheb) in western Punjab. After the British took the

Punjab, the movement transformed from a religious purification campaign to a political one. Its basic tenets were abolition of caste and similar discriminations among Sikhs, discouraging the eating of meat

Civil Rebellions and Tribal Uprisings 1757-1900 331

and taking of alcohol and drugs, and encouraging women to step out of seclusion.

In 1872, one of their leaders, Ram Singh, was deported to Rangoon.

#### WEAKNESSES OF THESE UPRISINGS

- These uprisings were massive in totality but were, in fact, localised and isolated.
- They were the result mostly of local grievances.
- The leadership was semi-feudal in character, backwardlooking, traditional in outlook and their resistance represented no societal alternative.
- These rebellions were centuries old in form and ideological-cultural content.
- The less recalcitrant of these were pacified through concessions by the authorities.

On the whole, however, these rebellions were able to establish valuable traditions of local resistance to authoritarianism.

## CHAPTER 14

Peasant Movements-1857-1947

#### PEASANTRY UNDER COLONIALISM

The impoverishment of the Indian peasantry was a direct result of the transformation of the agrarian structure due to

- colonial economic policies,
- ruin of the handicrafts leading to overcrowding of land,
- the new land revenue system,
- colonial administrative and judicial system.

The peasants suffered from high rents, illegal levies, arbitrary evictions and unpaid labour in zamindari areas. In Ryotwari areas, the Government itself levied heavy land revenue. The overburdened farmer, fearing loss of his only source of livelihood, often approached the local moneylender who made full use of the former's difficulties by extracting high rates of interests on the money lent. Often, the farmer had to mortgage his land and cattle. Sometimes, the moneylender seized the mortgaged belongings. Gradually, over large areas, the actual cultivators were reduced to the status of tenants-at-will, share croppers and landless labourers.

The peasants often resisted the exploitation, and soon they realised that their real enemy was the colonial state. Sometimes, the desperate peasants took to crime to come out of intolerable conditions. These

crimes included robbery, dacoity and what has been called social banditry.

#### A SURVEY OF EARLY PEASANT MOVEMENTS

Indigo Revolt (1859-60), In Bengal, the indigo planters, rly all Europeans, exploited the local peasants by forcing them to grow indigo on their lands instead of the more paying crops like rice. The planters forced the peasants to take advance sums and enter into fraudulent contracts which were

332

#### Peasant Movements 1857-1947 333

then used against the peasants. The planters intimidated the peasants through kidnappings, illegal confinements, flogging, attacks on women and children, seizure of cattle, burning and demolition of houses and destruction of crops.

The anger of the peasants exploded in 1859 when, led by Digambar Biswas and Bishnu Biswas of Nadia district, they decided not to grow indigo under duress and resisted the physical pressure of the planters and their lathiyals (retainers) backed by police and the courts. They also organised a counter force against the planters' attacks. The planters also tried methods like evictions and enhanced rents. The ryots replied by going on a rent strike by refusing to pay the enhanced rents and by physically resisting the attempts to evict them. Gradually, they learned to use the legal machinery and initiated legal action supported by fund collection.

The Bengali intelligentsia played a significant role by supporting the peasants' cause through newspaper campaigns, organisation of mass meetings, preparing memoranda on peasants' Brieaces and supporting them in legal battles.

The Government appointed an indigo commission to inquire into the problem of indigo cultivation. Based on its recommendations, the Government issued a notification in November 1860 that the ryots could not be compelled to grow indigo and that it would ensure that all disputes were settled by legal means. But, the planters were already closing down factories and indigo cultivation was virtually wiped out from Bengal by the end of 1860.

tabna Agrarian Leagues, During the 1870s and 1880s, large parts of Eastern Bengal witnessed agrarian unrest caused by oppressive practices of the zamindars. The zamindars resorted to enhanced rents beyond legal limits and prevented the tenants from acquiring occupancy rights under Act of 1859. To achieve their ends, the zamindars resorted to forcible evictions, seizure of cattle and crops and prolonged, costly litigation in courts where the poor peasant found himself at a disadvantage.

334 A Brief History of Modern India

Having had enough of the oppressive regime, the peasants of Yusufshahi Pargana in Patna district formed an agrarian league or combination to resist the demands of the zamindars. The league organised a rent strike. The ryots refused to pay the enhanced rents, challenging the zamindars in the courts. Funds were raised by ryots to fight the court cases. The struggles spread throughout Patna and to other districts of East Bengal. The main form of struggle was that of legal resistance; there was very little violence.

Though the peasant discontent continued to linger on till 1885, most of the cases had been solved, partially through official persuasion and partially because of zamindars' fears. Many peasants were able to acquire occupancy rights and resist enhanced rents. The Government also promised to undertake legislation to protect the tenants from the worst aspects of zamindari oppression. In 1885, the Bengal Tenancy Act was passed.

Again, a number of young Indian intellectuals supported the peasants' cause. These included Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, R.C. Dutt and the Indian Association under Surendranath Banerjee.

Deccan Riots, The ryots of Deccan region of western India suffered heavy taxation under the Ryotwari system. Here again the peasants found themselves trapped in a vicious network with the moneylender as the exploiter and the main beneficiary. These moneylenders were mostly outsiders— Marwaris or Gujaratis. The conditions had worsened due to a crash in cotton prices after the end of the American civil war in 1864, the Government's decision to raise the land revenue by 50% in 1867, and a succession of bad harvests.

In 1874, the growing tension between the moneylenders, and the peasants resulted in a social boycott movement organised by the ryots against the "outsider" moneylenders. The ryots refused to buy from their shops. No peasant would cultivate their fields. The barbers, washermen, shoemakers would not serve them. This social boycott spread rapidly to the villages of Poona, Ahmednagar, Sholapur and Satara. Soon

Peasant Movements 1857-1947 335

the social boycott was transformed into agrarian riots with systematic attacks on the moneylenders' houses and shops. The debt bonds and deeds were seized and publicly burnt.

The Government succeeded in repressing the movement. As a conciliatory measure, the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act was passed in 1879.

This time also, the modern nationalist intelligentsia of Maharashtra supported the peasants' cause.

CHANGED NATURE OF PEASANT MOVEMENTS AFTER 1857

- Peasants emerged as the main force in agrarian movements, fighting directly for their own demands.
- The demands were centred almost wholly on economic issues.

- The movements were directed against the immediate enemies of the peasant—foreign planters and indigenous zamindars and moneylenders.
- The struggles were directed towards specific and limited objectives and redressal of particular grievances.
- Colonialism was not the target of these movements. • It was not the objective of these movements to end the system of subordination or exploitation of the peasants. Territorial reach was limited.
- There was no continuity of struggle or long-term organisation.
- The peasants developed a strong awareness of their legal rights and asserted them in and outside the courts.

#### WEAKNESSES

There was a lack of an adequate understanding of colonialism.

- The 19<sup>th</sup> century peasants did not possess a new ideology and a new social, economic and political programme.
- These struggles, however militant, occurred within the framework of the old societal order lacking a positive conception of an alternative society.

#### 336 A Brief History of Modern India

#### LATER MOVEMENTS

The peasant movements of the 20th century were deeply influenced by and had a marked impact on the national freedom struggle. (Refer to the chapters on Freedom Movement for 'Champaran' and 'Kheda Satyagraha'.)

#### The Kisan Sabha Movement

After the 1857 revolt, the Awadh taluqdars had got back their lands. This strengthened the hold of the taluqdars or big landlords over the agrarian society of the province. The majority of the cultivators were subjected to high rents, summary evictions (bedakhali), illegal levies, renewal fees or nazrana. The First World War had hiked the prices of food and other necessities. This worsened the conditions of the UP peasants.

Mainly due to the efforts of the Home Rule activists, kisan sabhas were organised in UP. The UP Kisan Sabha was Gauri Shankar Mishra and Indra Dwivedi. Madan Mohan Malaviya supported their efforts. By June 1919, the UP Kisan Sabha had 450 branches. Other prominent leaders included Jhinguri Singh, Durgapal Singh and Baba Ramchandra. In June 1920, Baba Ramchandra urged Nehru to visit these villages. During these visits, Nehru with the villagers.

In October 1920, the Awadh Kisan Sabha came into existence because of differences in nationalist ranks. The Awadh Kisan Sabha asked the kisans to refuse to till bedakhali land, not to offer hari and begar (forms of unpaid labour), to boycott those who did not accept these conditions and to solve their disputes through panchayats.

From the earlier forms of mass meetings and mobilisation, the patterns of activity changed rapidly in January 1921 to the looting of bazaars, houses, granaries and clashes with the police. The centres of activity were primarily the districts of Rai Bareilly, Faizabad and Sultanpur

The movement declined soon., partly due to government repression and partly because of the passing of the Awadh Rent (Amendment) Act.

Peasant Movements 1857-1947 337

Eka Movement, Towards the end of 1921, peasant discontent resurfaced in some northern districts of the United Provinces—Hardoi, Bahraich, Sitapur. The issues involved were:

- (i) high rents-50 per cent higher than the recorded rates;
- (ii) oppression of thikadars in charge of revenue collection; and
- (iii) practice of share-rents.

The meetings of the Eka or the Unity Movement involved a symbolic religious ritual in which the assembled peasants vowed that they would

- pay only the recorded rent but would pay it on time;
- not leave when evicted;
- refuse to do forced labour;
- give no help to criminals;
- abide by panchayat decisions.

The grassroot leadership of the Eka Movement came from Madari Pasi and other low-caste leaders, and many small zamindars.

By March 1922, severe repression by authorities brought the movement to an end.

Mappila Revolt, The Mappilas were the Muslim tenants inhabiting the sureign where most of the landlords were Hindus. The Mappilas had expressed their resentment against the oppression of the landlords during the nineteenth century also. Their grievances centred around lack of security of tenure, high rents, renewal fees and other oppressive exactions.

The Mappila tenants were particularly encouraged by the demand or the local Congress body for a government legislation regulating tenant-landlord relations. Soon, the Mappila movement merged with the ongoing Khilafat agitation. The leaders of the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation Movement like Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad addressed Mappila meetings. After the arrest of national leaders, the leadership passed into the hands of local Mappila leaders.

338 A Brief History of Modern India

Things took a turn for the worse in August 1921 when the arrest of a respected priest leader, Ali Musaliar, sparked off large-scale riots. Initially, the symbols of british authority—courts, police stations, treasuries and offices—and unpopular landlords (jenmies who were mostly Hindus) were the targets. But once the British declared martial law and repression began in earnest, the character of the rebellion underwent a definite change. Many Hindus were seen by the Mappilas to be helping the authorities. What began as an anti-government and antilandlord affair acquired communal overtones. The communalisation of the rebellion completed the isolation of the Mappilas from the Khilafat-Non-

Cooperation Movement. By December 1921, all resistance had come to a stop.

Bardoli Satyagraha, The Bardoli taluqa in Surat district had witnessed intense politicisation after the coming of Gandhi on the national political scene. The movement sparked off in January 1926 when the authorities decided to increase the land revenue by 30 per cent. The Congress leaders were quick to protest and a Bardoli Inquiry Committee was set up to go into the issue. The committee found the revenue hike to be unjustified. In February 1926, Vallabhbhai Patel was called to lead the movement, The women of Bardoli gave him the title of "Sardar". Under Patel, the Bardoli peasants resolved to refuse payments of the revised assessment until the Government appointed an independent tribunal or accepted the current amount as full payment. To organise the movement, Patel set up 13 chhuzvanis or workers' camps in the taluqa. Bardoli Satyagraha Patrika was brought out to mobilise public opinion. An intelligence wing was set up to make sure all the tenants followed the movement's resolutions. Those who opposed the movement faced a social boycott. Special emphasis was placed on the mobilisation of women. K.M. Munshi and Lalji Naranji resigned from the Bombay Legislative Council in support of the movement.

By August 1928, massive tension had built up in the 'area. There were prospects of a railway strike in Bombay. Gandhi reached Bardoli to stand by in case of any emergency. The

Peasant Movements 1857-1947 339

Government was looking for a graceful withdrawal now. It set the condition that first the enhanced rent be, paid by all the occupants (not actually done). Then, a committee went into the whole affair and found the revenue hike to be unjustified and recommended a rise of 6.03 per cent only.

During the 1930s, the peasant awakening was influenced by the Great Depression in the industrialised countries and the Civil Disobedience Movement which took the form of no-rent, no-revenue movement in many areas. Also, after the decline of the active phase movement (1932) many new entrants to active politics started looking for suitable outlets for release of their energies and took to organisation of peasants.

India Kisan Congress Sabha, This sabha was founded in Lucknow in April 1936 with Swami Sahjanand Saraswati as the president and N.G. Ranga as the general secretary. A kisan manifesto was issued and a periodical under Indulal Yagnik started. The AIKS and the Congress held their sessions in Faizpur in 1936. The Congress manifesto (especially the agrarian policy) for the 1937 provincial elections was strongly influenced by the AIKS agenda.

Under Congress Ministries, The period 1937-39 was the high watermark of the peasant movements and activity under the Congress provincial rule. The chief form of mobilisation was through holding kisan conferences and meetings where demands were aired and resolutions were passed. Mobilisation campaigns were carried out in the villages.



## PEASANT ACTIVITY IN PROVINCES

### Kerala

In the Malabar region, the peasants were mobilised mainly by the Congress Socialist Party activists. Many "Karshak Sanghams" (peasants' organisations) came into existence. The most popular method was the marching of jaths or peasants groups to the landlords to get their demands accepted. One significant campaign by the peasants was in 1938 for the amendment of the Malabar Tenancy Act, 1929.

### Andhra

This region had already witnessed a decline in the prestige of zamindars after their defeat by Congressmen Peasant Movements 1857-1947 341

## 340 A Brief History of Modern India

in election & Anti-zamindar movements were going on in some places. Many provincial ryot associations were active. N.G. Ranga had set up, in 1933, the India Peasants' Institute. After 1936, the Congress socialists started organising the peasants. At many places, the summer schools of economics and politics were held and addressed by leaders like P.C. Joshi, Ajoy Ghosh and R.D. Bhardwaj.

### Bihar

Here, Sahjanand Saraswati was joined by Karyanand Sharma, Yadunandan Sharma, Rahul Sankritayan, Panchartan Sharma, Jamun Karjiti, etc. In 1935, the Provincial Kisan Conference adopted the anti-zamindari slogan. The Provincial Kisan Sabha developed a rift with the Congress over the 'bakasht land' issue because of an unfavourable government resolution which was not acceptable to the sabha. The movement died out by August 1939.

### Punjab

The earlier peasant mobilisation here had been organised by the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the Kirti Kisan Party, the Congress and the Akalis. A new direction to the movement was given by the Punjab Kisan Committee in 1937. The main targets of the movement were the landlords of western Punjab who dominated the unionist ministry. The immediate issues taken up were resettlement of land revenue in Amritsar and Lahore and increase in water rates in canal colonies of Multan and Montgomery where feudal levies were being demanded by the private contractors. Here the peasants went on a strike and were finally able to win concessions.

The peasant activity in Punjab was mainly concentrated in Jullundur, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Lyallpur and Shekhupura. The Muslim tenants at will of west Punjab and the Hindu peasants of south-eastern Punjab (today's Haryana) remained largely unaffected.

Peasant activity was also organised in Bengal (Burdwan and 24 Parganas), Assam (Surma Valley), Orissa, Central Provinces and NWFP.

## DURING THE WAR

Because of a pro-War line adopted by the communists, the AIKS was split on communist and non-communist lines and many veteran leaders like

Sahianand, Indulal Yagnik and N.G. Ranga left the sabha. But the Kisan Sabha continued to work among the people. It did notable work during the famine of 1943'.

#### POST-WAR PHASE

Tebhaga Movement, In September 1946, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha gave a call to implement, through mass struggle, the Flood Commission recommendations of tebhaga— two-thirds' share—to the bargardars, the share croppers also known as bagehasi or adhyar, instead of the one-half share. The bargardars worked on lands rented from the jotedars. The communist cadres, including many urban student militias went to the countryside to organise the bargardars. The central slogan was "nij khamare dhan tolo"—i.e., sharecroppers taking the paddy to their own threshing floor and not to the jotedar's house, as before, so as to enforce tebhaga.

The storm centre of the movement was north Bengal, principally among Rajbanshis—a low caste of tribal origin. Muslims also participated in large numbers. The movement dissipated soon, because of the League, ministry's sop of the Bargardari Bill, an intensified repression, the popularisation of the Hindu Mahasabha's agitation for a separate Bengal and renewed riots in Calcutta which ended the prospects of sympathetic support from the urban sections.

Telangana Movement, This was the biggest peasant guerrilla war of modern Indian history affecting 3000 villages and 3 million population. The princely state of Hyderabad under Asajahi Nizams was marked by a combination of religious-linguistic domination (by a mall Urdu-speaking Muslim elite ruling over predominantly Hindu-Telugu, Marathi, Kannada-speaking groups), total lack of political and civil liberties, grossest forms of forced exploitation by desh mukhs, jagirdars, doras (landlords) in forms of forced labour (vethi) and illegal exactions.

During the war the communist-led guerrillas had built a strong base in Telangana villages through Andhra Mahasabha

#### 342 A Brief History of Modern India

and had been leading local struggles on issues such as wartime exactions, abuse of rationing, excessive rent and vethi.

The uprising began in July 1946 when a desh mukh's thug murdered a village militant in Jangaon taluq of Nalgonda. Soon, the uprising spread to Warrangal and Kharnmam.

The peasants organised themselves into village sanghams, and attacked using lathis, stone slings and chilli powder. They had to face brutal repression. The movement was at its greatest intensity between August 1947 and September. 1948. The peasants brought about a rout of the Razaqars—the Nizam's storntroopers. Once the Indian security forces took over Hyderabad, the movement fizzled out.

The Telangana movement had many positive achievement to its credit.

- In the villages controlled by guerrillas, vethi and forced labour disappeared.
- Agricultural wages were raised.
- Illegally seized lands were restored.
- Steps were taken to fix ceilings and redistribute lands. Measures were taken to improve irrigation and fight cholera.
- An improvement in the condition of women was witnessed.
- The autocratic-feudal regime of India's biggest princely state was shaken up, clearing the way for the formation of Andhra Pradesh on linguistic lines and realising another aim of the national movement in this region.

#### BALANCE-SHEET OF PEASANT MOVEMENTS

These movements created an atmosphere for postindependence agrarian reforms, for instance, abolition of zamindari. They eroded the power of the landed class, thus adding to the transformation of the agrarian structure. These movements were based on the ideology of nationalism. The nature of these movements was similar in diverse areas.

## CHAPTER 15

### The Movement of the Working Class

The beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century heralded the entry of modern industry into India. The thousands of hands employed in construction of railways were harbingers of the modern Indian working class. Further industrialisation came with the development of ancillary industries along with the railways. The coal industry developed fast and employed a large working force. Then came the cotton and the jute industries.

The Indian working class suffered from the same kind of exploitation witnessed during the industrialisation of Europe and the rest of the West, such as low wages, long working hours, unhygienic and hazardous working conditions, employment of child labour and the absence of basic amenities. The presence of colonialism in India gave a distinctive touch to the Indian working class movement. The Indian working class had to face two basic antagonistic forces—an imperialist political rule and economic exploitation at the hands of both foreign and native capitalist classes. Under the circumstances, inevitably, the Indian working class movement became intertwined with the political struggle for national emancipation.

#### EARLIER EFFORTS

The early nationalists, especially the Moderates,

- were indifferent to the labour's cause; differentiated between the labour in the Indian-owned factories and those in the British-owned factories; believed that labour legislations would affect the competitive edge enjoyed by the Indian-owned industries;

## The Movement of the Working Class 345

- did not want a division in the movement on the basis of classes;
- did not support the Factory Acts of 1881 and 1891 for these reasons.

Thus, earlier attempts to improve the economic conditions of the workers were in the nature of the philanthropic efforts which were isolated, sporadic and aimed at specific local grievances.

1870 Sasipada Banerjee started a workingmen's club and newspaper Bharat Shramjeevi. 1878 Sorabjee Shapoorji engalee tried to get a bill, providing better working conditions to labour, passed in the Bombay Legislative Council.

1880 Narain Meghajee Lokhanday started the newspaper Deenbandhu and set up the Bombay Mill and Millhands Association. 1899 The first strike by the Great Indian Peninsular Railways took place, and it got widespread support. Tilak's Kesari and Maharatta had been campaigning for the strike for months.

There were many prominent nationalist leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal and G. Subramanya Aiyar who demanded better conditions for workers. another pro-labour reforms-

### DURING SWADESHI UPSURGE

Workers participated in wider political issues. Strikes were organised by Ashwini Coomar Banerjee, Prabhat Kumar Roy Chaudhuri, Premtosh Bose and Apurba Kumar Ghosh. These strikes were organised in government press, railways and the jute industry. There were attempts to form trade unions but these were not very successful. Subramaniya Siva and Chidambaram Pillai led strikes in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli and were arrested. The biggest strike of the period was organised after Tilak's arrest and trial.

### DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND AFTER

The War and its aftermath brought a rise in exports, soaring prices, massive profiteering opportunities for the industrialists but very low wages for the workers. This led to discontent among workers.

The emergence of Gandhi led to a broad-based national movement and the emphasis was placed on the mobilisation of the workers and peasants for the national cause. A need was felt for the organisation of the workers in trade unions. International events like the establishment of a socialist republic in the Soviet Union, formation of the Comintern and setting up of International Labour Organisation (ILO) lent a new dimension to the movement of the working class in India.

### The AITUC

The All India Trade Union Congress was founded on October 31, 1920. The Indian National Congress president for the year, Lala Lajpat Rai, was elected as the first president of AITUC and Dewan Chaman Lal as the first general secretary. Lajpat Rai was the first to link capitalism with imperialism-"imperialism and militarism are the twin children of capitalism".

The prominent Congress and swarajist leader C.R. Das presided over the third and the fourth sessions of the AITUC. The Gaya session of the Congress (1922) welcomed the formation of the AITUC and a committee was formed to assist it. C.R. Das advocated that the Congress should take up the workers' and peasants' cause and incorporate them in the struggle for swaraj or else they would get isolated from the movement. Other leaders who kept close contacts with the AITUC included Nehru, Sabhas Bose, C.F. Andrews, J.M. Sengupta, Satyamurthy, V.V. Giri and Sarojini Naidu. In the beginning, the AITUC was influenced by social democratic ideas of the British Labour Party. The Gandhian philosophy of non-violence, trusteeship and class-collaboration had great influence on the movement. Gandhi helped organise the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association (1918) and through

#### 346 A Brief History of Modern India

a protest secured a 27.5 per cent wage hike. (Later, the arbitrator's award ensured a 35 per cent raise.)

#### The Trade Union Act, 1926

- The Act recognised trade unions as legal associations;
- laid down conditions for registration and regulation of trade union activities;
- secured immunity, both civil and criminal, for trade unions from prosecution for legitimate activities, but put some restrictions on their political activities.

#### Late 1920s

A strong communist influence on the movement lent a militant and revolutionary content to it. In 1928 there was a six-month-long strike in Bombay Textile Mills led by the Girni Kamgar Union. The whole of 1928 witnessed unprecedented industrial unrest. This period also saw the crystallisation of various communist groups, with leaders like S.A. Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed, P.C. Joshi, Sohan Singh Joshi etc.

Alarmed at the increasing strength of the trade union movement under extremist influence, the Government resorted to legislative restrictions. It passed the Public Safety Ordinance (1929) and the Trade Disputes Act (TDA), 1929.

- The TDA, 1929 made compulsory the appointment of Courts of Inquiry and Consultation Boards for settling industrial disputes;
- made illegal the strikes in public utility services like posts, railways, water and electricity, unless each individual worker planning to go on strike gave an advance notice of one month to the administration;
- forbade trade union activity of coercive or purely political nature and even sympathetic strikes.

#### Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929)

In March 1929, the Government arrested 31 labour leaders, and the three-and-a-half-year trial resulted in the conviction of Muzaffar Ahmed, S.A. Dange, Joglekar, Philip Spratt, Ben Bradley, Shaukat Usmani and others. The trial got worldwide publicity but weakened the working class movement.

#### The Movement of the Working Class 347

The workers participated during 1930 in the Civil Disobedience Movement but after 1931 there was a dip in the working class movement because of a split in 1931 in which the corporatist trend led by N.M. Joshi broke away from the AITUC to set up the All India Trade Union Federation. In 1935, the communists rejoined the AITUC. Now, the left front consisted of the communists, Congress socialists and the leftist nationalists like Nehru and Subhas.

Under Congress Ministries During the 1937 elections, the AITUC had supported the Congress candidates. The Congress governments in provinces gave a fillip to the trade union activity. The Congress ministries were generally sympathetic to the workers' demands. Many legislations favourable to the workers were passed.

#### DURING AND AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Initially, the workers opposed the War but after 1941 when Russia joined the war on behalf of the Allies, the communists described the war as a "peoples' war" and supported it. The communists dissociated themselves from the Quit India Movement. A policy of industrial peace was advocated by the communists.

In the period 1945 to 1947, workers participated actively in the post-War national upsurges. In 1945, the dock workers of Bombay and Calcutta refused to load ships taking supplies to the warring troops in Indonesia. During 1946, the workers went on a strike in support of the Naval Ratings. During the last year of foreign rule, there were strikes by workers of posts, railways and many other establishments.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE The working class movement got polarised on the basis of political ideologies.

## CHAPTER 16

#### The Evolution of Nationalist Foreign Policy 349

#### The Evolution of Nationalist Foreign Policy

One of the factors that facilitated India's ready interaction with the world outside, immediately on independence, was the already well-established diplomatic engagement even under colonial rule. At independence, India was a member of 51 international organisations and a signatory to 600 odd treaties. India had signed the Versailles Treaty

after the First World War, largely as a result of having contributed more than a million soldiers to that war. In the 1920s, it was a founding member of the League of Nations, the International Labour Organisation, and the International Court of Justice. It participated in the Washington Conference on Naval Armaments in 1921-22. From 1920 there was an Indian high commissioner in London. Even before the First World War, Indian nationals were staffing a few diplomatic posts. It was no accident that Indians formed the largest and most influential non-Western contingent in the United Nations and allied agencies very soon after independence.

The basic framework of India's foreign policy was structured much before 1947. A significant and inevitable fallout of the Western influence on the nationalist intelligentsia was a growing interest in and contact with the dominant international currents and events. Gradually, the nationalist thinkers came to realise that colonialism and imperialism had an international character and much wider implications. With the development and crystallisation of an anti-imperialist nationalist ideology, there emerged a nationalist foreign policy perspective. The evolution of this policy perspective can be traced under these broad phases.

#### 1880 TO FIRST WORLD WAR ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND PAN-ASIAN FEELING

After 1878, the British undertook a number of expansionist expeditions which were opposed by the nationalists. These expeditions included—

- the Second Afghan War (1878-80);
- the dispatch of troops by England in 1882, to suppress the nationalist uprising by Col Arabi in Egypt;
- annexation of Burma in 1885;
- invasion of Tibet under Curzon in 1903; and
- a number of annexations during the 1890s in the northwest to stop the Russian advance. The nationalists supported the tribal resistance to these adventures by the British.

In place of an aggressive imperialism, the nationalists advocated a policy of peace. C. Sankaran Nair, the Congress president in 1897, said, "Our true policy is a peaceful policy." So, the emerging themes during 1880-1914 were—

1. solidarity with other colonies fighting for freedom, such as Russia, Ireland, Egypt, Turkey, Ethiopia, Sudan, Burma and Afghanistan;
2. pan-Asian feeling reflected in—
  - condemnation of annexation of Burma in 1885,
  - inspiration from Japan as an example of industrial development,
  - condemnation of the participation of Japan in the international suppression of the I-Ho-Tuan uprising (1895),
  - condemnation of the imperialist efforts to divide China,
  - defeat of the Czarist Russia by Japan which exploded the myth of European superiority,
  - Congress support for Burma's freedom.

#### WORLD WAR I

The nationalists supported the British Indian Government in the belief that Britain would apply the same principles of democracy for which they were supposed to be fighting. After

### 350 A Brief History of Modern India

the conclusion of the War

the Congress insisted on being represented at the Peace Conference. In 1920, the Congress urged the people not to join the Army to fight in the West. In 1925, the Congress condemned the dispatch of Indian Army to suppress the Chinese nationalist army under Sun-Yat-Sen.

#### 1920s AND 1930s—IDENTIFYING WITH SOCIALISTS

In 1926 and 1927, Nehru was in Europe where he came in contact with the socialists and other leftist leaders. Earlier, Dadabhai Naoroji attended the Hague session of the International Socialist Congress. He was a close friend of H.M. Hyndmarr, the famous socialist. Lajpat Rai also made contacts with the American socialists during his visit to the USA from 1914 to 1918. Gandhi had close relations with Tolstoy and Rolland Romain. In 1927, Nehru attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalists at Brussels on behalf of the Indian National Congress. The conference was organised by political exiles and revolutionaries from Asia, Africa and Latin America, suffering from political and economic imperialism. Nehru was one of the honorary presidents along with Einstein, Madam Sun-Yat-Sen, Rolland Romain and George Lansbury. Nehru came to understand the international character of US imperialism during his European experience. Nehru was also nominated to the executive council of the League Against Imperialism. The Congress also decided to open a foreign department to be in touch with the other peoples' movements. In 1927, Nehru also visited the Soviet Union and was very impressed by the achievements of the infant socialist state. He saw Russia as a bulwark against imperialism.

#### AFTER 1936—ANTI-FASCISM

The 1930s saw the rise of Fascism in Europe and the struggle against it. The nationalists saw imperialism and fascism as organs of capitalism. They lend support to the struggle against fascism in other parts of the world in Ethiopia, Spain, China, Czechoslovakia. In 1939, at the Tripuri session, the Congress

### The Evolution of Nationalist Foreign Policy 351

dissociated itself from the British policy which supported fascism in Europe.

In 1939, the Japanese attack on China was condemned by the nationalists. The Congress also sent a medical mission under Dr Atal to China.

On the Palestine issue, the Congress lent support to the Palestinians. It expressed sympathy with the Jews, but urged that the Palestinians not be displaced and that the issue be settled by direct dealing between the Jews and the Arabs without Western intervention. It also opposed the partition of Palestine.

#### AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Nehru is often called the architect of India's foreign policy. He realised the importance of the need to have direct contact with other



nations and to cooperate with them in enhancing world peace and freedom; he also understood the importance of maintaining an identity as a free nation and not become a satellite of any other nation, however mighty. In his address to the Constituent Assembly on December 4, 1947, Nehru laid the foundations of India's foreign policy: "the art of conducting the foreign affairs of a country lies in finding out what is most advantageous to the country. We may talk about peace and freedom and earnestly mean what we say. But in the ultimate analysis, a government functions for the good of the country it governs, and no government dare do anything which in the short or long run is manifestly to the disadvantage of the country."

The main challenge to Nehru was to evolve a policy that could help India compete on the world arena with the modern states, and for that, he realised, a drastic socio-economic and technological transformation of the country was required. His objective was to transform India without becoming dependent on, any particular country or group of countries to the extent of losing independence of thought or policy. What India needed was peaceful relations with all nations so that it could

## 352 A Brief History of Modern India

### The Evolution of Nationalist Foreign Policy 353

concentrate on its developmental efforts, and relations good enough for it to get the necessary help in that direction without compromising its freedom. In the circumstances, nonalignment seemed to be the right policy.

#### Non-Alignment

The global environment that India faced after independence was very different from what existed before the Second World War. The major players on the world stage before the War, namely, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan, lay subdued, their vast empires shrunken or shrinking fast. The United States, which had followed an isolationist policy, keeping aloof from active international involvement, became dramatically active. The Soviet Union had acquired unprecedented influence in Eastern Europe besides gaining recognition as a powerful state for crushing the German might on the Eastern Front where most of the German military casualties had occurred. If the US demonstrated its nuclear weapon capability in 1945, the USSR followed suit with its own nuclear test in 1949. The Cold War that began in the wake of the Second World War had no precedent in history. Almost the entire developed world was divided into two opposing nuclear-armed blocs, with the US and the USSR leading as 'super powers'. The balance of power diplomacy of the pre-war years thus disappeared from the industrialised countries. The Third World became a surrogate field for super power competition. Meanwhile, decolonisation was proceeding apace, and more and more independent countries were emerging, mostly in Asia and Africa. China was aligned with the Soviet Union till the mid-fifties. India found itself the largest country with the ability to manoeuvre between the two blocs.

At this point of time, the Soviet Union did not possess the economic or military support capability to influence the countries emerging from the colonial yoke. It was the West, which tried to incorporate the newly independent countries into its strategic grouping. Alignment with the West was economically attractive, but it would have created a dependent relationship, which was seen by most of the newly independent countries as obstructive to a self-reliant development. The idea of aligning with the communist bloc was not possible for India, in spite of its socialist leanings; it could not visualise a Chinese type restructuring of the society and economy, being basically attuned to a liberal democratic political vision. Political nonalignment was, therefore, prudent as well as pragmatic.

The principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and maintenance of one's own sovereignty (which are the basic postulates of India's foreign policy) evolved into the crystallisation of the concept of non-alignment. The term 'non-alignment' got currency in the post-Bandung Conference (1955). Non-alignment implies the active refusal of a state to align itself with either party in a dispute between two power blocs. In the conference of non-aligned powers (the first non-aligned movement or NAM summit), held in Belgrade.

#### Five Criterias of Non-alignment

The Preparatory Committee of the first non-aligned conference laid down the following five criteria of non-alignment:

- (i) A country should follow an independent policy based on peaceful co-existence and non-alignment.
- (ii) It should have consistently supported national freedom movements in other countries.
- (iii) It should not be a member of multi-lateral military alliances concluded in the context of super-power conflicts.
- (iv) If it has conceded military bases, these concessions should not have been made in the context of super-power conflicts.
- (iv) If it is a member of a bi-lateral or regional defence arrangements, this should not be in the context of superpower politics.

#### Five Pioneering Leaders of the NAM

- (i) President Tito (original name Josip Broz) of Yugoslavia.
- (ii) President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt.
- (iii) President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.
- (iv) President Sukarno of Indonesia.
- (v) Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India.

#### 354 A Brief History of Modern India

in 1961 and attended by 36 Mediterranean and Afro-Asian powers, Jawaharlal Nehru explained the essence of non alignment "We call ourselves the confederation of non-aligned countries. Now the word non-aligned may be differently interpreted but basically it was used and coined almost with the meaning: non aligned with greater power blocs of the world. Non-aligned has a negative meaning but if you give it a positive connotation it means nations which object to this lining up for

war purpose, military blocs, military alliances and the like. Therefore, we keep away from this and we want to throw our weight, such as it is, in favour of peace".

Non-alignment is the characteristic feature of our foreign policy. India was one of the founder members of NAM. In the Cold War era, India refused to favour any super power and remained non-aligned. Non-alignment, however, is not to be confused with neutrality. A neutral state remains inactive or passive during hostilities between two blocs. Neutrality is maintained basically in times of war, whereas non-alignment has relevance both in times of war and peace. Neutrality is equivalent to passivity, a neutral country has no opinions, (positive or negative) on issues at all. However, adherence to non-alignment is to have positive and constructive opinions on international issues. India has firmly and convincingly asserted its 'non-aligned' and not 'neutral' stand on various issues. Non-alignment as one of the principles of India's foreign policy attempts to promote international peace, disarmament and territorial independence. It aims at democratisation of international relations by putting an end to imperialism and hegemony and establishing a just and equal world order.

## Ready Reference Data

### PERSONALITIES ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIFIC MOVEMENTS

#### SWADESHI MOVEMENT

Lokmanya Tilak spread the message of swadeshi to Poona and Bombay and organised Ganapati and Shivaji festivals to arouse patriotic feelings. He stressed that the aim of swadeshi, boycott and national education was attainment of swaraj. He opened cooperative stores and headed the Swadeshi Wastu Pracharini Sabha.

Lala Lajpat Rai took the movement to Punjab and parts of northern India. He was assisted in his venture by Ajit Singh. His articles, which were published in Kayastha Samachar, endorsed technical education and industrial self-sufficiency.

Syed Haider Raza popularised the Swadeshi Movement in Delhi.

Chidambaram Pillai spread the movement to Madras and organised the strike of the Tuticorin Coral Mill. He founded the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company in Tuticorin on the east coast of the Madras Province.

Bipin Chandra Pal of the Extremist clan played a major role in popularising the movement, especially in the urban areas. He was the editor of New India.

Laikat Hossain of Patna suggested boycott and organised the East Indian Railway strike in 1906. He also wrote fiery articles in Urdu to rouse nationalist sentiments in Muslims. He was supported by other Muslim

swadeshi agitators like Ghaznavi, Rasul, Din Mohammed, Dedar Bux, Moniruzzaman, Ismail Hussain, Siraji, Abdul Hussain and Abdul Gaffar.

356 A Brief History of Modern India

Ready Reference Data 357

Shyamsunder Chacrabarti, a swadeshi political leader, helped in organising strikes.

Ramendra Sunder Trivedi called for observance of arandhan (keeping the hearth unlit) as a mark of mourning and protest on the day the partition was put into effect.

Rabindranath Tagore composed several songs to inspire freedom struggle and revived Bengali folk music to rouse national pride. He also set up some swadeshi stores and called for the observance of raksha bandhan (tying of threads on each other's wrists as a sign of brotherhood).

Aurobindo Ghosh was in favour of extending the movement to the rest of India. He was appointed as the principal of Bengal National College founded in 1906 to encourage patriotic thinking and an education system related to Indian conditions and culture. He was also the editor of Bande Mataram and through his editorials encouraged strikes, national education etc in the spirit of the Swadeshi Movement. He was assisted by Jatindranath Bannerji and Barindrakurriar Ghosh (who managed the Anushilan Samiti).

Surendranath Banerjee, who held moderate nationalist opinion launched powerful press campaigns through newspapers like The Bengalee and addressed mass meetings. He was assisted by Krishnakumar Mitra and Narendra Kumar Sen.

Ashwini Kumar Dutt, a school teacher, set up Swadesh Bandhab Samiti to propagate the Swadeshi Movement and led the Muslim peasants of Barisal in their protests.

Promotha Mitter, arindrakumar Ghosh, Jatindranath Banerji founded the Anushilan Samiti in Calcutta. Gokhale, president of the Benaras session of the Indian National Congress, 1905, supported the Swadeshi Movement.

Abdul Halim Guznavi, a zamindar and a lawyer, set up swadeshi industries and helped Aurobindo Ghosh to extend revolutionary activities outside Bengal. He was assisted by Abul Kalam Azad.

Dadabhai Naoroji at the 1906 Congress session declared that the goal of the Congress was to attain swaraj.

Acharya P.C. Roy, in order to promote swadeshi, set up the Bengal Chemicals Factory. Das, Rajanikanta Sett, Dwijendralal Roy, Girindramohirti Dosi, Sayed Abu Mohammed composed patriotic songs on swadeshi themes. Girishchandra Ghosh, shirodeprasad Vidyavinode and Asmitlal Bose were playwrighters who contributed to the swadeshi spirit through their creative efforts.

Ashwini Coomar Bannerji, a swadeshi activist, led the jute mill workers to form an Indian Millhancis' Union at BudgeBudge in August 1906.

Satish Chandra Mukherji through his Dawn Society promoted an education system under indigenous control. Ghosh of the Amrit Bazar Patrika group contributed several fiery articles in the paper to arouse patriotic sentiments and was in favour of Extremism.

Bralunabandhab Upadhyay through his Sandhya and Yugantar (brought out by a group associated with Barindrakumar Ghosh) popularised swaraj and the Swadeshi Movement

jogendrachandra set up an association in March 1904 to raise funds to facilitate students to go abroad for technical and industrial training.

Manindra Nandi, a zamindar from Kasimbazar, patronised several indigenous industries.

Kalisankar Sukul brought out several pamphlets on Swadeshi Movement and argued that a new kind of business class should be built to promote national interests.

Sunder Lal, a student from UP, was drawn towards terrorism.

Kunwarji Mehta and Kalyanji Mehta began organisational work through the Patidar Yuvak Mandal.

Lala Harkishan Lal promoted Swadeshi Movement in Punjab through the Brahmo-leaning group which began the Tribune newspaper. He also founded the Punjab National Bank.

Mohammed Shah -and Fazal-i-Husain were leaders of a Muslim group in Punjab involved in constructive swadeshi, rather than boycott.

### 358 A Brief History of Modern India

V. Krishnaswami Iyer headed the 'Mylapore' group in the Madras Presidency.

G. Subramaniya Iyer, T. Prakasam and M. Krishna Rao were other leaders in the south but were opposed to V.K. Iyer. Prakasain and Krishna Rao started Kistnapatrika in Masulipatnam in 1904.

Subramaniya Bharati, a member of Tamilian revolutionary group and an eminent poet, played a significant role in arousing nationalism in the Tamil areas.

Prabhatkusum Roy Chauchurl, Athanasuis Apurba kumar Ghosh were lawyers who helped in organising labour; Premtosh Bose was another pioneer labour leader.

Hemachandra Kanungo was one of the first revolutionary leaders, Wand after his return from Paris (he had gone there to get military

training), a combined bomb factory and religious school was set up in Calcutta.

Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, two revolutionaries, murdered Kennedy on April 30, 1908.

Pulin Das organised the Deccan Anushilan, with the Barrah dacoity as its first major venture.

Madan Mohan Malaviya and Motilal Nehru were in favour of cooperation with provincial governments and nonpolitical Swadeshi Movement,

Sachindranath Sanyal emerged as a revolutionary leader in Benaras through contacts with Mokhodacharan Samadhyay (the editor of Sandhya after the death of Brahmbandhab).

The Savarkar brothers founded the Mitra Mela in 1899 and were directly involved in extremism in Maharashtra.

Dinshaw Wacha persuaded mill-owners in Maharashtra to sell dhotis at moderate prices.

#### NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

M.K. Gandhi issued a manifesto in March 1920, announcing his doctrine of non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement. He was the main force behind the movement and

Ready Reference Data 359

urged the people to adopt swadeshi principles and habits including hand spinning, weaving and work for removal of untouchability. He addressed lakhs of people during his nation-wide tour in 1921. He suspended the movement after an outburst of violence at Chauri Chaura in UP in February 1922.

C.R. Das moved the main resolution on non-cooperation in the annual session of the Congress in Nagpur in 1920 and played a major role in promoting the movement. A successful lawyer, he boycotted the law courts and gave up a lucrative practice. His three subordinates and supporters, Birendranath Samsal in Midnapore, J.M. Sertgupta in Chittagong and Subhash Bose in Calcutta played a major role in uniting the Hindus and Muslims.

Jawaharlal Nehru carried on the non-cooperation propaganda and encouraged the formation of kisan sabhas to take up the cause of the peasants exploited by government policies. He was against Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement.

J.M. Sengupta, a Bengali nationalist leader, supported the labourers on tea plantations in Assam in their protests and strike.

Basanti Debi, wife of C.R. Das, was one of the first women volunteers to court arrest in 1921.

Birendranath Samsal organised the anti-union board agitation in the Contai and Tamluk sub-divisions of Midnapore. In November-December 1921, Samsal initiated a no-tax movement among the Mahishya substantial tenantry of Midnapore.

Jitendralal Banerji organised the peasants in 1921-22 to resist settlement operations in Bogra, Pabna and Birbhum.

Subhash Chandra Bose supported the movement and resigned from the civil service. He was appointed the principal of the National College in Calcutta.

Ali brothers (Shaukat Ali and Muhammed Ali) who were the foremost Khilafat leaders vehemently supported Gandhi in his nation-wide tour to spread the movement. At

### 360 A Brief History of Modern India

the All India Khilafat Conference, Muhammed Ali declared that 'it was religiously unlawful for the Muslims to continue in the British Army'. The Ali brothers were arrested later.

Motilal Nehru renounced his legal practice in response to the non-cooperation call by Gandhi. He was arrested in 1921. Other notable lawyers who gave up their practice included M.R. Jayakar, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, T. Prakasam and Asaf Ali. Their sacrifice inspired many others, who boycotted government jobs and entered the mainstream of freedom struggle.

Lala Lajpat Rai was initially not in favour of the policy of non-cooperation (he was against the boycott of schools) but later he supported the movement. In fact he protested against its withdrawal in 1922.

Rajendra Prasad actively supported the Gandhian movement in Bihar.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel spread the movement in Gujarat and regarded non-cooperation as a feasible alternative to revolutionary terrorism to fight against a colonial government.

Motilal lejawat organised the Bhils and the Bhil movement strengthened the non-cooperation activities.

Alluri Sitaram Raju led the tribals in Andhra and combined their demands with those of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Hasrat Mohani, a Khilafat leader, condemned the arrest of the Ali brothers and demanded complete independence.

Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Cowasji Jehangir, Phroze Sethna and Setalvad, all of whom belonged to the industrialist section, launched an Anti-Non( cooperation Association in 1920.

Kunhammad Haji, Kalathingal Mammad, Ali Musaliar, Sithi Koya Thangal and Imbechi Koya Thangal acted as presidents of the Khilafat Republics set up at a number of places.

K. Madhavan Nair, U. Gopala Menpn, Yakub Hasan and P. Moideen Koya were the Khilafat leaders and supporters

Ready Reference Data 361

of the Non-Cooperation Movement. They were arrested in February 1921.

Muhammad Osman, another Khilafat agitator, organised volunteer groups and trade unions in Calcutta.

Swami Vishwanand (supported by Ramjas Agarwala, a Marwari mine owner) and Swami Darsan, organised the, coal miners of the Raniganj-Jharia belt for the NonCooperation Movement.

Kishan Singh and Mota Singh called for no-revenue movements and headed the "Babbar Akali" group, which emerged as :a dissident of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee, in 1921 in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur.

Jairamadas Daulatram was a close associate of Gandhi and promoted the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Swami Govindanand, a supporter of Gandhi, was jailed for five years on charges of sedition in May 1921. He later became a critic of the Congress.

S.A. Dange, RS. Nimbkar, V.D. Sathaye, RV. Nadkarni, S.V. Deshpande and K.N. Joglekar were members of a radical student group and promoted the movement although they were not in line with Gandhi's views. They were influenced by R.B. Lotwalla, a millionaire with a socialist leaning. Dange, in April 1921, wrote Gandhi versus Lenin and was in favour of swaraj which would nationalise factories and distribute zamindari land among farmers.

Thiru Vika supported the labour uprising and strike at the Buckingham and Carnatic textile mills from July to October 1921.

Singaravelu Chettiar was a lawyer and labour organiser in Madras and played a significant role in merging the labour and freedom movements. He was the first communist in south India and was in favour of using non-violent non-cooperation against 'capitalistic autocracy'.

Konda Venkatappaya, A. Kaleswara Rao, T. Prakasam and Pattabhi Sitaramaya led the Non-Cooperation Movement in the Andhra delta region.

Duggirala Gopalakrishrtayya inspired the inhabitants of the small town of Chirala-Parala in Guntur district to resist

362 A Brief History of Modern India



the Government's plan to make the town a municipality and the hike in local taxes.

N.C. Bardaloi, an Assam Congress leader, favoured non-cooperation but was against strikes in plantations, as he himself was a planter.

'Assam Kesari' Arnbikagiri Roy Chaudhuri's poetry had a profound impact on the Assamese and helped in arousing nationalist spirit in them.

Muzaffar Ahmad formed the pioneer communist group in Calcutta. He was influenced by M.N. Roy and Nalini Gupta.

Someshwarprasad Chaudhuri, a student in Calcutta, organised the peasants protesting against indigo cultivation on the Rajshahi-Nadia and Pabna-Murshidabad border.

Purushottamdas Tandon, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Govind Ballabh Pant and Lal Bahadur Shastri began their political careers in 1920-21, with the onset of the Non-Cooperation Movement

Premchand, a well-known novelist, resigned his post in a Gorakhpur government school in February 1921 and started contributing to the journal Aaj. His novels Premnasharam, Rangbhumi etc reflect Gandhian principles and values and endorse non-cooperation as an effective weapon to gain freedom.

Baba Ramchandra organised peasants' revolt in south and south-east Avadh and helped merge the peasants' revolt with the Non-Cooperation Movement. He was arrested in February 1921.

A. Shah Naim Ata announced himself 'King of Salon' and initiated no-taxes movement

B.

M.N. Roy, a communist leader, was the editor of the communist journal Vanguard. He condemned the sessions court's sentence to death to 172 of the 225 accused in the Chauri Chaura incident (later, 19 were hanged and the rest transported) as against 22 policemen killed.

Bhagwan Ahir, an army pensioner in Gorakhpur village, was beaten up by the British police. The incident flared up nationalist sentiments in the village, which then, led to the killing of 22 policemen in Chauri-Chaura, by the peasants.

Ready Reference Data 363

#### CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

M.K. Gandhi formally launched the Civil Disobedience Movement on April 6, 1930 by picking a handful of salt after the completion of historic 'Dandi March' from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, thus breaking the salt law imposed by the Government. He was the major force behind the movement and inspired grass-root participation in the freedom struggle.

C Rajagopalachari led a salt march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam on the Tanjore coast in Tamil Nadu, in support of the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was arrested on April 30, 1930.

K. Kelappan, a Nair Congress leader, launched the Vaikom Satyagraha and marched from Calicut to Payanneer in defiance of salt laws.

Jawaharlal Nehru was actively involved in the movement and was arrested on April 17, 1930 for defiance of the salt law. He formulated a radical agrarian programme and suggested formation of the Constituent Assembly as the prime political slogan.

P. Krishna Pillai defended the national flag and resisted lathicharge on the Calicut beach on November 11, 1930. He later founded the Kerala Communist Movement.

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan formed a clan of non-violent revolutionaries, the Khudai Khidmatgars (known as Red Shirts), who played an active role in the movement.

Sarojini Naidu, the first Indian woman to become the president of the Congress, was involved in a march towards the Dharsana Salt Works, a government salt depot. Other leaders who participated in this total non-violent affair were Imam Saheb, Gandhi's comrade of the South African struggle, and Manilal, Gandhi's son.

Surya Sen's Chittagong Revolt Group carried out a raid on two armouries and declared the establishment of a provisional government. He issued a manifesto in the name of Indian. Republican Army and called on the Indians to revolt against the British rule.

### 364 A Brief History of Modern India

Abbas Tayabji, a leader of the nationalist Muslims in Bombay, took the place of Gandhi in the movement after the latter's arrest. However, he too was arrested by the Government.

Ambalal Sarabhai and Kasturbhai Lakhai gave their cooperation to Motilal Nehru in removing the barriers between the Congress and the Bombay mill-owners and industrialists.

Industrialists such as G.D. Birla (who donated from one to five lakh rupees), Janinalal Bajaj (who served as the AICC treasurer for several years and represented Gandhian leadership in Bombay), Homi Modi, VValchand Hirachand, Lalji Naranji, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Lala Sri Ram etc supported the movement in its first phase. Homi Modi, in his presidential speech to Bombay Mill-owners' Association in March 1931 said that though the Swadeshi Movement had helped the Indian industry, frequent strikes had dislocated trade and industry. Naranji and Thakurdas, who had remained indifferent to the nationalist struggle in 1921, demanded Indian control over finance, currency, fiscal policy and railways, from September 1930, there was a sharp decline in support from the industrialists and traders; with the prominent businessmen having differences of opinion with the Congress.

Chandraprabha Saikiani instigated the aboriginal Kachari :villagers in Assam to break forest laws.

Subhash Bose and J.M. Sengupta led the faction group -in Bengal Congress and set up rival organisations to conduct disobedience. Bose criticised Gandhi, when the latter suspended the movement in May 1933. He was supported by Vithalbhai Patel.

Bonga Majhi and Somralajhi led the movement in Hazaribagh along the sanslrcritising lines with the Congress.

Kalka Prasad, a local leader in Rai Bareilly, promoted no-rent campaign.

Santi and Suniti Chaudhari assassinated the district magistrate of Tippera, Stevens. Their action marked the entry of women in the revolutionary movement.

Ready Reference Data 365

Seth Achal Singh, a nationalist landlord, financed the Gram Seva Sangh in Agra and remained indifferent to riots in the area, while strictly following the policy of non-violence.

Sheikh Abdullah, a Muslim graduate, started an agitation and attacked the Srinagar jail on July 31, 1931 where 21 persons were killed in police firing. He also developed close contacts with a group of anti-autocratic Jammu Hindus led by. P.N. Bazaz.

Mohammed Yasin Khan, a Muslim leader in Punjab, organised the Meos (semi-tribal peasant community with leanings towards Islam) to protest against Maharaja Jaisingh Sawai's hike in revenue, begar, and reservation of forests for the purpose of hunting.

K.M. Ashraf, who became India's first:Marxist historian, was associated with the movement.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was an upholder of Gandhian policies since 1920's, began to drift away with the launch of Harijan campaign by Gandhi. He started a breakaway Congress Nationalist Party.

Satyamurthi, Bhulabhai Desai, M.A. Ansari and B.C. Roy demanded a return to electoral politics by way of a revived Swarajya Party.

Jayaprakash Narayan, Achhut Patwardhan, Yusuf Mehrali, Ashok Mehta and Minoo Masani wanted the Congress to have affinity with left-wing.

Sampurnanand formulated 'A Tentative Socialist Programme' for India and a Congress Socialist Party was started in 1934, which was supported by Narendra Dev.

K.F. Nariman and Yusuf Meher Ali led the Congress youth wing and later emerged as socialist leaders.

Swami Govindanand led the movement in Karachi and Sindh.

N.V. Gadgil with his socialist leanings lent support to a temple entry-movement in 1929 and established friendly ties with the non-brahmin Satyashodhak Samaj. (represented by Keshavrao Jedhe of Poona).

B.R. Ambedkar, who was the leader of the untouchable

366 A Brief History of Modern India

Mahars, attended the Round Table Conference in 1930. However, the Congress failed to win over the political agitation of the Mahars.

Gopabandhu Chaudhuri popularised the movement in Orissa and led the salt satyagraha in the coastal areas of Balasore, Cuttack and Puri districts.

Tarunaram Phookan and N.C. Bardoloi, two prominent Congress leaders, were against the movement in Assam. They refused to take up forest satyagraha officially.

Jadunandan Sharma activated the Kisan Sabha Movement in Gaya district of Bihar.

Duggirala Balaramakrishnaya of the Krishna district initiated a no-revenue campaign in 1931 in coastal Andhra. He also wrote a Telugu ballad Gandhi Gita which aroused patriotic sentiments.

N.V. Rama Naidu and N.C. Ranga organised a forest satyagraha in Venkatagiri estate in Nellore in 1931.

A.K. Gopalan, a school teacher, was a popular activist at Guruvayoor in Kerala and later became Kerala's most popular communist peasant leader.

Mannu Gond and Chaitu Koiku offered forest satyagraha in Betul in Central Provinces.

Maulana Bhasani, organised a large praja sammelan at Sirajgunj and demanded abolition of zamindari and reduction in debts.

B.T. Ranadeve and S.V. Deshpande in Bombay and Abdul Halim, Somnath Lahiri and Ranen Sen in Calcutta were the young communist militants who organised several labour strikes. V.B. Karnik, Maniben Kara, Rajani Mukherji and Niharendu Dutta were other leaders who started trade union activities.

M.N. Roy and his followers popularised socialist ideas in the villages and a no-tax campaign was started in Awadh.  
QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

M.K. Gandhi planned an all-out campaign to compel British withdrawal from India, after the failure of the Cripps

Ready Reference Data 367

Mission to reach a compromise. At the historic August meeting at Gowalia Tank in Bombay, Gandhi proclaimed his mantra- 'do or die'. He was arrested on August 9, 1942. He undertook a 21-day fast in February 1943 to protest against the Government actions against Indians involved in the movement

Jayaprakash Narayan was a member of the Congress Socialist group and played a prominent role in the movement.

Ram Manohar Lohia, Aruna Asaf Ali, Sucheta Kripalani, Chhotubhai Puranik, Biju Patnaik, R.P. Goenka and Achyut Patwardhan were leaders associated with the underground movement and revolutionary activities in support of Quit India Movement.

Chittu Pande, who called himself a Gandhian, formed a parallel government and captured all the ten police stations in Ballia, in east UP in August 1942.

Usha Mehta actively supported the movement and was an important member of a small group which ran the Congress Radio.

Jawaharlal Nehru initially supported the arch Moderates, who were opposed to Gandhi's plan, but later, he moved the Quit India Resolution on August 8, 1942.

Sumati Morarjee helped Achyut Patwardhan in his underground activities. She later became India's leading woman industrialist.

Rashbehari Bose, a revolutionary activist, was elected the president of the Indian Independence League (formed in March 1942) in June 1942. He was living in Japan since 1915 as a fugitive. He mobilised Indian soldiers taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese forces (after the British was defeated in South East Asia) for an armed rebellion against the British colonial rule.

Captain Mohan Singh, an Indian soldier fighting on behalf of the British was taken as prisoner of war by the Japanese. He was persuaded by a Japanese army officer to work with the Japanese for India's freedom. He was appointed the commander of the Indian National Army.

368            A Brief History of Modern India

Subhash Chandra Bose joined the Indian National Army in 1943. One of his most famous declarations was "Tum mujhe khun do, mai tumhe azadi doonga" (You give me blood, I will give you freedom). The INA played a significant role in the independence struggle under the leadership of Subhash Bose.

C. Rajagopalachari and Bhulabhai Desai were the arch. Moderates, who were in favour of recognising the rights of Muslim majority provinces to secede through plebiscites after independence had been gained. They resigned from the AICC in July 1942.

K.G. Mashruwalla brought out two militant issues of Harijan (after the arrest of Mahadev Desai) to arouse the sentiments of people.

K.T. Bhashyam, a Congress leader in Bangalore, played an active role in the trade union field and organised strikes by about 30,000 workers.

Satish Samanta, a local Congress leader and the first sarbadhinayak of the Tamluk Jatiya Sarkar, helped in establishing a rebel 'national government' in Tamluk sub-division of Midnapore.

Matangini Hazra, a 73-year-old peasant widow in Tamluk, was killed in violence on September 29, 1942, when the Satahata police-station was captured. Matangini kept the national flag aloft even after being shot.

Lakshman Naik, an illiterate villager, led a large tribal population from Koraput to protest against the Jeypore mindari and attack police-stations. Lakshman Naik was hanged on November 16, 1942 for allegedly murdering a forest guard.

Nana Patil headed a rebellion in Satara.

Ready Reference Data                      369

#### GOVERNORS-GENERAL AND VICEROYS OF INDIA SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THEIR RULE

##### Governor-General

##### 1. Warren Hastings 1773-1785

- (i) Regulating Act of 1773.
- (ii) Act of 1781, under which the powers of jurisdiction between the governor-general in council and the Supreme Court at Calcutta, were clearly divided.
- (iv) Pitt's India Act of 1784.
- (iv) The Rohilla War of 1774.
- (v) The First Maratha War in 1775-82 and the Treaty of Salbai in 1782.
- (vi) Second Mysore War in 1780-84.
- (vii) Strained relationships with Chait Singh, the Maharaja of Benaras, which led to Hastings' subsequent impeachment in England.
- (viii) Foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784).

##### 2. Lord Cornwallis 1786-1793

- (i) Third Mysore War (1790-92) and Treaty of Seringapatam (1792).
- (ii) Cornwallis Code (1793) incorporating several judicial reforms, and separation of revenue administration and civil jurisdiction.
- (iii) Permanent Settlement of Bengal, 1793.
- (iv) Europeanisation of administrative machinery and introduction of civil services.

##### 3. Sir John Shore 1793-1798

- (i) Charter Act of 1793.
- (ii) Battle of Khanda between the Nizam and the Marathas (1795).

4. Lord Wellesley 1798-1805

- (i) Introduction of the Subsidiary Alliance System (1798), first alliance with Nizam of Hyderabad.
- (ii) Fourth Mysore War (1799).
- (iii) Second Maratha War (1803-05).
- (iv)

370            A Brief History of Modern India

- (iv) Took over the administration of Tanjore (1799), Surat (1800) and Carnatic (1801).
- (v) Treaty of Bassein. (1802).

5. Sir George Barlow 1805-1807  
Vellore Mutiny (1806).

6. Lord Minto 1807-1813

Treaty of Amritsar with Ranjit Singh (1809).

7. Lord Hastings 1813-1823

- (i) Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16) and the Treaty of Sagauli, 1816.
- (ii) Third Maratha War (1817-19) and dissolution of Maratha Confederacy; creation of Bombay Presidency (1818).
- (ii) Strife with Pindaris (1817-1818).
- (iv) Treaty with Sindhia (1817).
- (vi) Establishment of Ryotwari System by Thomas Munro, governor of Madras (1820).

8. Lord Amherst 1823-1828

- (i) First Burmese War (1824-1826).
- (ii) Capture of Bharatpur (1826).

9. Lord William Bentinck 1828-1835

- (i) Abolition of sati and other cruel rites (1829).
- (ii) Suppression of thugi (1830).
- (iii) Charter Act of 1833.
- (iv) Resolution of 1835, and educational reforms and introduction of English as the official language.
- (iv) Annexation of Mysore (1831), Coorg (1834) and Central Cachar (1834).
- (v) Treaty of 'perpetual friendship with Ranjeet Singh.
- (vi) Abolition of the provincial courts of appeal and circuit set up by Cornwallis, appointment of commissioners of revenue and circuit.

10. Lord Metcalfe 1835-1836

New press law, removing restrictions on the press in India.

Ready Reference Data                      371

11. Lord Auckland 1836-1842

- (i) First Afghan War (1838-42).
- (ii) Death of Ranjit Singh (1839).

12. Lord Ellenborough 1842-1844

- (i) Annexation of Sindh (1843).
- (ii) War with Gwalior (1843).

13. Lord Hardinge 1844-1848

- (i) First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46) and the Treaty of Lahore (1846).
- (ii) Social reforms including abolition of female infanticide and human sacrifice.

14. Lord Dalhousie 1848-1856

- (i) Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49) and annexation of Punjab (1849).
- (ii) Annexation of Lower Burma or Pegu (1852).
- (iii) Introduction of the Doctrine of Lapse and annexation of Satara (1848), Jaitpur and Sambhalpur (1849), Jhansi (1853), Nagpur (1854) and Awadh (1856).
- (iv) "Wood's (Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control) Educational Despatch" of 1854 and opening of Anglo-vernacular schools and government colleges.
- (v) Railway Minute of 1853; and laying down of first railway line connecting Bombay and Thane in 1853.
- (vi) Telegraph (4000 miles of telegraph lines to connect Calcutta with Bombay, Madras and Peshawar) and postal (Post Office Act, 1854) reforms.
- (vii) Ganges Canal declared open (1854); establishment of separate public works department in every province.
- (viii) Widow Remarriage Act (1856).

15. Lord Canning 1856-1857

- (i) Establishment of three universities at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay in 1857.
- (ii) Revolt of 1857.

372 A Brief History of Modern India

Viceroy

1. Lord Canning 1858-1862

- (i) Transfer of control from East India Company to the Crown, the Government of India Act, 1858.
- (ii) 'White Mutiny' by European troops in 1859.
- (iii) Indian Councils Act of 1861.

2. Lord Elgin 1862-1863

Wahabi Movement.

3. Lord John Lawrence 1864-1869

- (i) Bhutan War (1865)
- (ii) Setting up of the High Courts at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (1865).

4. Lord Mayo 1869-1872

- (i) Opening of the Rajkot College in Kathiawar and the Mayo College at Ajmer for political training of Indian princes.
- (ii) Establishment of Statistical Survey of India.



- (iii) Establishment of Department of Agriculture and Commerce.
- (iv) Introduction of state railways.

5. Northbrook 1872-1876

- (i) Visit of Prince of Wales in 1875.
- (ii) Trial of Gaekwar of Baroda.
- (iii) Kuka Movement in Punjab.

6. Lytton 1876-1880

- (i) Famine of 1876-78 affecting Madras, Bombay, Mysore, Hyderabad, parts of central India and Punjab. appointment of Famine Commission under the presidency of Richard Strachey (1878).
- (ii) Royal Titles Act (1876), Queen Victoria assuming the title of 'Kaiser-i-Hind' or Queen Empress of India.
- (iii) The Vernacular Press Act (1878).
- (iv) The Arms Act (1878).
- (v) The Second Afghan War (1878-80).

Ready Reference Data                      373

7. Lord Ripon 1880-1884

- (i) Repeal of the Vernacular Press Act (1882).
- (ii) The first Factory Act (1881) to improve labour conditions.
- (iii) Continuation of financial decentralisation.
- (iv) Government resolution on local self-government (1882).
- (v) Appointment of Education Commission under chairmanship of Sir William Hunter (INV.).
- (vi) The Ilbert Bill controversy (1883-84).
- (vii) Rendition of Mysore.

8. Lord Dufferin 1884-1888

- (i) The Third Burmese War (1885-86).
- (ii) Establishment of the Indian National Congress (1885).

9. Lord Lansdowne 1888-1894

- (i) Factory Act (1891).
- (ii) Categorisation of civil services into imperial, provisional and subordinate.
  - (iv) Indian Councils Act (1892).
  - (v) Setting up of Durand Commission (1893) to define the Durand Line between India and Afghanistan (now between Pakistan and Afghanistan).

10. Lord Elgin II 1894-1899

- (i) Two British officials assassinated by Chapekar brothers (1897).

11. Lord Curzon 1899-1905

- (i) Appointment of Police Commission (1902) under Sir Andrew Frazer to review police administration.
- (ii) Appointment of Universities Commission (1902) and passing of Indian Universities Act (1904).
- (iii) Establishment of Department of Commerce and Industry.

- (iv) Calcutta Corporation Act (1899).
- (v) Ancient Monuments Preservation Act (1904).
- (vi) Partition of Bengal (1905).
- (vii) Curzon-Kitchener controversy.
- (viii) Younghusband's Mission to Tibet (1904).

### 374 A Brief History of Modern India

#### 12. Lord Minto 1905-1910

- (i) Popularisation of anti-partition and Swadeshi Movements.
- (ii) Split in Congress in the annual session of 1907 in Surat.
- (iii) Establishment of Muslim League by Aga Khan (1906).

#### 13. Lord Hardinge II 1910-1916

- (i) Creation of Bengal Presidency (like Bombay and Madras) in 1911.
- (ii) Transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi (1911).
- (iii) Establishment of the Hindu Mahasabha (1915) by Madan Mohan Malaviya.
- (iv) Coronation durbar of King George V held in Delhi (1911).

#### 14. Lord Chelmsford 1916-1921

- (i) Formation of Home Rule Leagues by Annie Besant and Tilak (1916).
- (ii) Lucknow session of the Congress (1916).
- (iii) Lucknow pact between the Congress and Muslim League (1916).
- (iv) Foundation of Sabarmati Ashram (1916) after Gandhi's return; launch of Champaran Satyagraha (1916), Kheda Satyagraha (1918), and Satyagraha at Ahmedabad (1918).
- (v) Montagu's August Declaration (1917).
- (vi) Government of India Act (1919).
- (vii) The Rowlatt Act (1919).
- (viii) Jallianwalla Bagh massacre (1919).
- (ix) Launch of Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements.
- (x) Foundation of Women's University at Poona (1916) and appointment of Saddler's Commission (1917) for reforms in educational policy.
- (xi) Death of Tilak (August 1, 1920).
- (xii) Appointment of S.P. Sinha as governor of Bihar (the first Indian to become a governor).

### Ready Reference Data

375

#### 15. Lord Reading 1921-1926

- (i) Chauri Chaura incident (February 5, 1922) and the subsequent withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement.
- (ii) Moplah rebellion in Kerala (1921).
- (iv) Repeal of the Press Act of 1910 and the Rowlatt Act of 1919.
- (iv) Criminal Law Amendment Act and abolition of cotton excise.
- (v) Communal riots in Multan, Amritsar, Delhi, Aligarh, Arvi and Calcutta.
- (vi) Kakori train robbery (1925).
- (vii) Murder of Swami Shraddhanand (1926).

- (viii) Establishment of Swaraj Party by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru (1922).
- (ix) Decision to hold simultaneous examinations for the ICS both in Delhi and London, with effect from 1923.

#### 16. Lord Irwin 1926-1931

- (i) Visit of Simon Commission to India (1928) and the boycott of the commission by the Indians.
- (ii) An All-Parties Conference held at Lucknow (1928) for suggestions for the (future) Constitution of India, the report of which was called the Nehru Report or the Nehru Constitution.
- (iv) Appointment of the Harcourt Butler Indian States Commission (1927).
  - (iv) Murder of Saunders, the assistant superintendent of police of Lahore; bomb blast in the Assembly Hall of Delhi (1929); the Lahore Conspiracy Case and death of Jatin Das after prolonged hunger strike (1929), and bomb accident in train in Delhi (1929).
- (v) Lahore session of the Congress (1929); Purna Swaraj Resolution.
- (vi) Dandi March (March 12, 1930) by Gandhi to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement.
- (vii) 'Deepavali Declaration' by Lord Irwin (1929).

#### 376 A Brief History of Modern India

- (viii) Boycott of the First Round Table Conference (1930), Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931) and suspension of Civil Disobedience Movement.

#### 17. Lord Willingdon 1931-1936

- (i) Second Round Table Conference (1931) and failure of the conference, resumption of Civil Disobedience Movement.
- (ii) Announcement of Communal Award (1932) under which separate communal electorates were set up.
- (iii) 'Fast unto death' by Gandhi in Yeravada prison, broken after the Poona Pact (1932).
  - (iv) Third Round Table Conference (1932).
- (iv) Launch of Individual Civil Disobedience (1933).
- (v) The Government of India Act of 1935.
- (vi) Establishment of All India Kisan Sabha (1936) and Congress Socialist Party by Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan (1934).
  - (viii) Burma separated from India (1935).

#### 18. Lord Linlithgow 1936-1944

- (i) First general elections (1936-37); Congress attained absolute majority.
- (ii) Resignation of the Congress ministries after the outbreak of the Second World War (1939).
  - (iii) Subhash Chandra Bose elected as the president of Congress at the fifty-first session of the Congress (1938).
  - (iv) Resignation of Bose in 1939 and formation of the Forward Bloc (1939).

- (vi) Lahore Resolution (March 1940) by the Muslim League, demand for separate state for Muslims.
- (vii) 'August Offer' (1940) by the viceroy; its criticism by the Congress and endorsement by the Muslim League.
- (viii) Winston Churchill elected prime minister of England (1940).
  - (viii) Escape of Subhash Chandra Bose from India (1941) and organisation of the Indian National Army.

Ready Reference Data                      377

- (ix) Cripps Mission's, Cripps Plan to offer dominion status to India and setting up of a Constituent Assembly; its rejection by the Congress.
- (ix) Passing of the 'Quit India Resolution' by the Congress (1942); outbreak of 'August Revolution'; or Revolt of 1942 after the arrest of national leaders.
- (x) 'Divide and Quit' slogan at the Karachi session (1944) of the Muslim League.

#### 19. Lord Wavell 1944-1947

- (i) C. Rajagopalachari's CR Formula (1944), failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks (1944).
- (ii) Wavell Plan and the Shimla Conference (1942).
  - (iv) End of Second World War (1945).
    - (iv) Proposals of the Cabinet Mission (1946) and its acceptance by the Congress.
- (v) Observance of 'Direct Action Day' (August 16, 1946) by the Muslim League.
- (vi) Elections to the Constituent Assembly, formation of Interim Government by the Congress (September 1946).
  - (vii) Announcement of end of British rule in India by Clement Attlee (prime minister of England) on February 20, 1947.

#### 20. Lord Mountbatten 1947-1948

- (i) June Third Plan (June 3, 1947) announced.
- (ii) Introduction of Indian Independence Bill in the House of Commons.
  - (ii) Appointment of two boundary commissions under Sir Cyril Radcliff for the partition of Bengal and Punjab.

378                      A Brief History of Modern India

#### NORTH-EAST FRONTIER TRIBAL MOVEMENTS    YEAR, REGION, MAJOR CAUSES

1. Ahoms' Revolt (1828-33; Assam); against the non-fulfilment of the pledges of the Company after the Burmese War; the uprising was suppressed by the Company by dividing the kingdom.
2. Khasis' Revolt (1830s; hilly region between Jaintia and Garo Hills); led by the Nunklow ruler, Tirath Singh; against the occupation of the hilly region.
3. Singphos' Rebellion (1830s; Assam); led to murder of British political agent of Assam by Singphos in 1839; was ultimately suppressed.
4. Kukis' Revolt (1917-19; Manipur); against British policies of recruiting labour during the first World War.

5. Revolts in Tripura; against hike in house tax rates and against settlement of outsiders in the region
  - (a) led by Parikshit Jamatia (1863)
  - (b) the Reangs' revolt led by Ratnamani (1942-43)
  - (c) led by Bharti Singh (1920s).
6. Zeliangsong Movement (1920s; Manipur); led by the Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmei tribes; against the failure of British to protect them during the Kuki violence in 1917-19.
7. Naga movement (1905-31; Manipur); led by Jadonang; against British rule and for setting up of a Naga raj.
8. Heraka Cult (1930s; Manipur); led by Gaidinliu; the movement was suppressed but Kabui Naga Association was formed in 1946.

Ready Reference Data 379

#### OTHER TRIBAL MOVEMENTS: PERIOD, REGION, CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

1. Pahariyas' Rebellion by the martial Pahariyas (1778; Raj Mahal Hills); against the British expansion on their lands.
2. Chuar Uprisings by the Chuar aboriginal tribesmen (1776); against rise in demands and economic privation by the British.
3. Kol Uprisings by the Kols of Chottanagpur led by Buddho Bhagat (1831); against expansion of British rule on their lands and transfer of their lands to outsiders; the revolt was suppressed.
4. Ho and Munda Uprisings
  - (a) by Ho tribals by led of Raja Parahat (1827; Singhbhum and Chottanagpur); against occupation of Singhbhum by British.
  - (b) by Ho tribals and the Mundas (1831); against the newly introduced farming revenue policy.
  - (c) by the Mundas led by Birsa Munda (1899-1900; south of Ranchi); Birsa was captured and imprisoned.
  - (d) the Ulgulan uprising, supported by Birsa Munda (1860-1920); against introduction of feudal, zamindari tenures and exploitation by moneylenders and forest contractors.
5. Santhal Rebellion by the Santhals led by Sido and Kanhu (1855-56; Bihar); against the practices of zamindars and moneylenders; the rebellion later turned anti-British and was suppressed.
6. Kandh uprisings led by Chakra Bisoi (1837-56 and later in 1914; hilly region extending from Tamil Nadu to Bengal; in Orissa in 1914); against interference in tribal customs and imposition of new taxes.
7. Naikada Movement (1860s; Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat); against British and caste Hindus.
8. Kharwar Rebellion by the Kharwars (1879s; Bihar); against revenue settlement activities.

380 A Brief History of Modern India

9. Khonda Dora Campaign by Khonda tins loll Mallaya (1900; Dabur region in.
10. Bhil Revolts (1817-19 and 1913; region of against Company Rule (in 1817-19) and to Mill Hal.
11. Bhuyan and Juang Rebellions by the Mill Kals; first uprising was led by Novak: uprising was led by Dharni Dhar lira 93; Kheortjhar, Orissa); against the installation of a protege on the throne after the death of their king.

12. Koya Revolts by the Koyas and the led by Tomma Sora in 1879-80 – led by Raja Anantayyar in region Andhra Pradesh); against moneylenders; new regulations AM sir theft rights over forest areas.
13. Bastar Revolt (1910; Jagdalpur); against new forest levies.
14. Tana Bhagat Movements among tribes led by Jatra Bhagat, Bali am who pleat that God's benevolent delegate mink' to tribals (1914-1915; Chottanagpore), against of outsiders; began as Sanskritmitiosi
15. Rampa Revolts led by Alum sit thr 11 (1 1 Nampa legion in against British interference; and in 1924.
16. Jharkhand Uprising by tribalm (1920 onwards; parts of Bihar, t )t Adivasi Mahasabha was In replaced by Regional Jharklianil In.
17. Forest Satyagrahas
  - (a) by Chen(Irrr district in Andhra),
  - (b) by Kat s ( JUI(h, Bihar); against increasing rn±Ir rl.
18. Gond Uprising (1940s) to bring the of Gond-dharma.

Ready Reference Data 381

#### CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA AT A GLANCE

Act of 1773

- (i) the beginning of parliamentary government of the Company;
- (Ii) of presidencies of Bombay and Madras the governor of Bengal made the governor-general; it of the governor-general established; a Supreme Court at Fort William.

This Act laid the foundation of a unitary type of Government in British India.

According to Lord North, "Every article in it is framed willi a view to the placing of the affairs of the Company on a solid, clear and decisive establishment."

According to Burke, the Regulating Act was "an infringement of national right, national faith and national justice".

Pitt's India Act, 1784

- (i) reiterated the supremacy of British Parliament over the administration of the Company.
- (ii) reduced the strength of the council from four to three.
- (iii) the Company's territories in India were called "the British possessions in India".
- (iv) Governor's council(s) established in Madras and Bombay.

Sir C. Ilbert : "The Act enunciated a system which with its cumbersome and dilatory procedure and its elaborate system of checks and counter-checks, though modified in details, remained substantially in force uptill 1858."

Charter Act, 1813

- (i) Company's monopoly over Indian trade terminated; Indian trade thrown open to all the British subjects.
- (ii) missionaries allowed to preach in India.

382 A Brief History of Modern India

Charter Act, 1833

- (i) Governor-general of Bengal designated as governor-general of India.
- (ii) the first faint beginnings of a Central Legislature for India.

(iii) fair and impartial treatment to Indians in matter of selection for state service.

According to Lord Morley, the Act of 1833 was the most important Act passed by the Parliament till 1909.

Charter Act, 1853

- (i) the last of the Charter Acts.
- (ii) Indian Civil Service opened for all.
- (iii) for the first time, the legislature given the right to frame its own rules of procedure.

Act of 1858

- (i) Indian administration taken over by the British Crown; viceroy to be the Crown's representative.
- (ii) office of secretary of state and Council of India created.

Indian Councils Act, 1861

- (i) Legislative Councils established at the centre and in the presidencies and provinces.
- (ii) Councils to include non-official members.

Indian Councils Act, 1892

- (i) enlarged the size and functions of central and provincial councils.
- (ii) the council to have the right to discuss budget under certain conditions.
- (iii) members of the council granted the right to ask questions.

Indian Councils Act, 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms)

- (i) first attempt at introducing a representative and popular element.
- (ii) Councils, for the first time, referred to as 'Legislative Councils'.
- (iii) separate electorates for Muslims introduced.
- (iii) the beginning of non-official resolutions in the council.

Government of India Act, 1919 (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms)

- (i) Dyarchy in the provinces; relaxation of central control over the provinces.

Ready Reference Data 383

- (iii) Indian legislature made more representative and bicameral; Legislative Assembly and Council of State to consist of 140 and 60 members.

Government of India Act, 1935

- (i) introduced federation and provincial autonomy; the envisaged federation never came into being.
- (ii) the bicameral central legislatures to consist of Federal Assembly and Council of State.
- (iv) three-fold division of legislative power (federal, provincial and concurrent lists).

Indian Independence Act, 1947

(i) Sovereignty and responsibility of British Parliament abolished.

(ii) Dominion legislature became sovereign.

(iii) Governor-general and provincial governors became constitutional heads.

(v) the Crown ceased to be the source of authority.

#### INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS ANNUAL SESSIONS

Year/Place

President

Details

1. 1885 (Dec. 28) Bombay W.C. Bonnerji
2. 1886 (Dec. 28) Calcutta Dadabhai Naoroji
3. 1887 (Dec. 27-28) Madras Syed Badruddin Tyabji
4. 1888 (Dec. 28-29) Allahabad George Yule
5. 1889 (Dec. 27-28) Bombay William Wedderburn
6. 1890 (Dec. 28-29) Calcutta Pheroz Shah Mehta
7. 1891 (Dec. 26-27) Nagpur P. Ananda Charlu
8. 1892 (Dec. 28-29) Allahabad W.C. Bonnerji
9. 1893 (Dec. 27-28) Lahore Dadabhai Naoroji
10. 1894 (Dec. 27-28) Madras Alfred Webb
11. 1895 (Dec. 28-29) Poona Surendranath Banerjee
12. 1896 (Dec. 27-28) Calcutta Rahimtulla Sayani
13. 1897 (Dec. 22-29) Amravati C. Sankaran Nair

first session, attended by 72 delegates; objectives of the Congress outlined. attended by 436 delegates; witnessed the merger of National Congress and National Conference. attended by 607 delegates; appeal made to the Muslims to join hands with other national leaders. attended by 1248 delegates.

14. 1898 (Dec. 27-28) Madras A.M. Bose
15. 1899 (Dec. 27-28) Lucknow Romesh Chandra Mutt
16. 1900 (Dec.
17. 1901 (Dec.
18. 1902 (Dec.
19. 1903 (Dec.
20. 1904 (Dec.

21. 1905 (Dec. 27-29) Lahore N.G. Chandavarkar 27-28) Calcutta  
Dinshaw E. Wacha 23-26) Ahmedabad Surendranath Bonnerjee Banerjee  
28-30) Madras

26-28) Bombay 27-30) Benaras

22. 1906 (Dec. 26-29) Calcutta 23. 1907 (Dec. 26-27) Surat 24.

1908 (Dec. 29-30) Madras 25. 1909 (Dec. 27-29) Lahore

26. 1910 (Dec. 28-29) Allahabad 27. 1911 (Dec. 26-28) Calcutta 28.

1912 (Dec. 27-28) Bankipur 29. 1913 (Dec. 26-28) Karachi

Lal Mohan Chose

Henry Cotton Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Dadabhai Naoroji Rash Behari Ghosh Rash Behari Ghosh Madan Mohan

Malaviya

William Wedderburn Bishan Narayan Dhar R.N. Mudholkar Sved Mohammed

demand for permanent fixation of land revenue.

expressed resentment against the partition of Bengal. the word 'swaraj'

mentioned for the first time. split in the Congress into the Moderates



and the Extremists. constitution of the Congress drawn. expressed disapproval over formation of separate electorates on the basis of religion (of the Indian Councils Act, 1909).

Year/Place

President

Details

30. 1914 (Dec. 28-30) Madras

31. 1915 (Dec. 27-30) Bombay

32. 1916 (Dec. 26-30) Lucknow

33. 1917 (Dec. 28-29) Calcutta

34. 1918 (Dec. 26-31) Delhi

35. 1919 (Dec. 27-28) Arfirtsar

Bhupendranath Basu S.P. Sinha A.C. Majumdar

Annie Besant Madan Mohan Malaviya Motilal Nehru

36. 1920 (Dec. 26-31) Nagpur C. Vijayaraghavachariar

37. 1921 (Dec. 27-28) Ahmedabad

38. 1922 (Dec. 26-31) Gaya

39. 1923 (Dec. 28-31) Kakinada

40. 1924 (Dec. 26-27) Belgaum

41. 1925 (Dec. 26-28) Kanpur

42. 1926 (Dec. 26-28) Gauhati

43. 1927 (Dec. 26-27) Madras

C.R. Das (in prison) Hakim Ajmal Khan (acting president) C.R. Das

Maulana Mohammad Ali M.K. Gandhi Sarojini Naidu S. Srinivasa Iyengar

M.A. Ansari

44. 1928 (Dec. 28-31) Calcutta Motilal Nehru

reunion of Congress factins; the Lucknow Pact signed. strongly condemned the Jallianwalla massacre; and boosted the Khilafat Movement. a new Constitution for the Congress framed. the Swarajya Party formed.

the Independence Resolution adopted; resolved to boycott the Simon Commission. the first All India Youth Congress came into being.

45. 1929 (Dec. 29-31) Lahore

46. 1931 (March 29) Karachi

47. 1932 (April 24) Delhi

48. 1933 (April 1) Calcutta

49. 1934 (Oct. 26-28) Bombay

50. 1936 (April 12-14) Lucknow

51. 1936 (Dec. 27-28) Faizpur

52. 1938 (Feb. 19-21) Haripura

53. 1939 (March 10) Tripuri

54. 1940 (March 17-19) Ramgarh

55. 1946 (Nov. 23) Meerut

56. 1948 (Dec. 18-19) Jaipur

Jawaharlal Nehru

Vallabhbhai Patel

Amrit Ranchorddas Seth Nellie Sengupta Rajendra Prasad Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru Subhash Chandra Bose

Subhash Chandra Bose

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Acharya J.B. Kripalani Pattabhi Sitaramayya

passed the Purna Swaraj Resolution; authorised the Working Committee to launch civil disobedience programme. endorsement of Gandhi-Irwin pact, resolution on Fundamental Rights and National Economic Programme passed.

the President urged the Congress to adopt socialism as its goal. the session held in a village for the first time. National Planning Committee set up under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Rajendra Prasad took over as president after Subhas Chandra resigned. (The sessions for the years 1930, 1935 and 1941-1945 could not be held.)

#### FAMOUS TRIALS OF THE NATIONALIST PERIOD

Trial

Charges

Verdict

Bahadur Shah Zafar; January 27, 1858 to March 9, 1858 in Red Fort

(Delhi) Surendranath Banerjee; May 4-5, 1883 in Calcutta High Court

Bal Gangadhar Tilak; 1897, 1908, 1916

Aurobindo Ghosh and 37 others in Alipore Bombay Case Trial; 1908-1909

V.D. Savarkar; 1910 and January 1911

treason, conspiracy, rebellion and murder in 1857 revolt

contempt of court, on his remarks in The Bengalee

provocative articles in Kesari

attempt to murder district judge of Muzaffarpur

delivering infuriating speeches against British and procuring and

distributing arms

convicted and exiled to Rangoon.

sent to civil jail for two years.

18 months' imprisonment (1897); six years' exile to Mandalay and fine of Rs 1000 for seditious writings (1908); no jail sentence was imposed (1916). spent a year in jail as an undertrial prisoner.

two consecutive life transportations (50 years); the International Court of Arbitration at the Hague also held him guilty; spent 10 years in Andaman jail (1911-1921).

6. Gandhi and. Shankarlal Banker (publisher of Young India); 1922 7. 31

communists in the Meerut Conspiracy Case; March 1929 8. Bhagat Singh;

June 1929

July 1929

9. M.N. Roy; 1931-1932

10. Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem

Kumar Sehgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon in the INA trials; 1945

at Red Fort, Delhi

four inflammatory articles against the British in Young India

conspiracy against the British

throwing a bomb in Central Assembly killing police head constable,

Saunders conspiracy and sedition

waging war by murdering or abetment of murder

sentenced to jail for 6 years; but set free in 1924. received sentences varying from 3 years to life sentence. received transportation for life. sentenced to death. sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment (later reduced to 6 years). sentences of transportation for life were remitted; but those of cashiering and forfeiture of arrears of pay and allowances were confirmed.

#### SOCIO-RELIGIOUS REFORM MOVEMENTS (LATE 18TH TO MID-20TH CENTURY) (Caste, tribal and peasant movements are covered separately)

Name of the Movement/ Organisation and Place

People Associated with it

Nature and Objectives, and Media Efforts

CrJ

I

z.

Swaminarayan Sampradyaga; Gujarat (early 19th century)

Brahmo Samaj (earlier Atmiya Sabha); Founded in Calcutta (late 18th-early 19th century)

Swami Sahajanand (original name Gyanashyama)-1781- 1830  
Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833)-the founder; Debendranath Tagore-later formed Adi Brahmo Samaj; Keshub Chandra Sen-later associated with Brahmo Samaj of India (secessionists from this group formed Sadharan Brahmo Samaj)

Belief in a theistic god, protest against epicurean practices of Vaishnavism; prescribed a moral code. Propagated monotheism, opposed incarnation, meditation, sacrifices, existence of priests, idolatry, superstition, sati; sought for reforms in Hindu society. Journals brought out by Rammohan Roy: Sambad Kaumudi (1821), Mirat-ul-Akbar; by Debendranath Tagore: Tattva Bodhini Patrika; Keshub Chandra Sen brought out Indian Mirror; Sadharan Brahmo Samaj brought out Tattva Kaumudi, The Indian Messenger, The Sanjibari, the Navyabharat, and Prabasi.

Young Bengal Movement (1826-1831)

Dharma Sabha; Calcutta (1830)

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (founder), Rasikkrishna Mullick,  
Tarachand Chuckervati, Krishanmohan Banerjee

Radhakant Deb (1794-1876) (founder)

Wahabi Movement (beginning Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly in Rohilkhand-  
spread in Kabul, (founder); Vilayat Ali, Shah NTWFP Rpiwal. the  
Central Prov- Muhammad Hussain, Farhat

inces; Sittana in NWFP-head-

quarters from 1850 onwards (19th century-founded in 1820; suppression  
by the British by 1870)

Hussain (all from Patna); Inayat Ali

Opposed the vices in society; believed in truth, freedom and reason;  
brought out the Thanavesan (journal) and established the Society for the  
Acquisition of General Knowledge (Derozio edited Hesperus, The Calcutta  
Library Gazette and he was associated with India Gazette). Emerged to  
counter Brahmo Samaj, aimed at protection of orthodoxy, condemned  
radical and liberal reforms, helped in the spread of western education.  
Popularised the teachings of Waliullah; opposed the British and fought  
against the Sikhs; stressed role of individual conscience in religion.

R.

◈◉

◈◉

d a

f,

Name of the Movement/ Organisation and Place

I

People Associated with it

Nature and Objectives, and Media Efforts

Namdhari or Kuka Movement (among Sikhs); NWF Province and Bhaini  
(Ludhiana district, Punjab) (1841-1871) Taayuuni Movement; founded in  
Dacca (1839)

Students Literary and Scientific Society (1848) Paramhans Mandali  
(1849)

Rahanumai Mazdayasanan Sabha (religious reform association for Parsis-  
1851)

Radhaswarni Movement; founded in Agra (1861)

Bhai Balak Singh and Ram Singh (founders)  
Karamat Ali Jaunpuri

Baba

S.S. Bengali, Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji and others

Tulsi Ram or Shiv Dayal Saheb (Swamiji Maharaj-founder)

For political and social reforms among the Sikhs.

Religious teachings of Shah Waliullah formed the basis; opposed Faraizi movement. Debated popular science and social questions. Emphasised unity of godhead; against caste rules. To improve the social condition of the Parsis and restore the purity of Zoroastrianism. Their journal was Rast Goftar (Truth Teller). Preached belief in one supreme being, the guru's supreme position, simple social life for believers (the satsang); stress on achieving spiritual fulfilment without giving up material life. The Deoband School of Islamic Theology (at Deoband Saharanpur, UP-1866)

Prarthana Samaj; Bombay (1867)

founded in

Indian Reform Association; Calcutta (1870)

Muhammad Qasim Nanaytavi (1832-80) and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (founders),  
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mahmudul-Hasan, Shibli Numani

Atmaram Pandurang (founder), Govind Ranade (chief mentor), R.G. Bhandarkar

Keshub Chandra Sere

Arya Samaj; founded in Bombay Dayanand Saraswati (original(1875) ly  
Mula Shankar-founder)

Revivalist movement whose religious teachings encompassed a liberal interpretation of Islam; for moral religious upliftment; did not take to western influences in education; opposed Syed Ahmed Khan's views to some extent; welcomed the formation of the Indian National Congress. Worship and reform of society through emphasis on monotheism, uplift of women, abolition of caste discrimination and religious orthodoxy. To create public opinion against child marriages; for uplift of social status of women; to legalise Brahmo type of marriage. Asserted Hindu faith over other religions; within a revivalist framework, denounced rites.

Name of the Movement/ Organisation and Place  
People Associated with it  
Nature and Objectives, and Media Efforts

W

Aligarh Movement (the Aligarh School grew into the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in 1877 and later the Aligarh Muslim University (1875–year of founding the Aligarh School). Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–1898–founder of the Aligarh School).

The Theosophical Society– founded in New York but headquarters shifted to Adyar, near Madras (1875). Madam H.P. Blavatsky (1831– 91), a Russian, and Col. H.S. Olcott (1832–1907), an American (founders); Annie Besant (one of its presidents).

Deccan Education Society; Pune (1884). M.G. Ranade, V.G. Chibdonkar, G.G. Agarkar– (founders).

Brahmins' supremacy, idolatry, superstitions; Dayanand AngloVedic (DAV) schools were established. Religious reform through emphasis on principle of enquiry in religion, favoured scientific and rational outlook, recognised Western education, aimed at social reform; Sir Syed Ahmed founded a scientific society (1864), Tahzib-al-akhlaq (1870)– Urdu journal. Drew inspiration from Upanishads, philosophy of the Vedanta, etc to aim at religious revival and social reform. For contributing to education and culture in western India; established Ferguson College, Pune (in 1885).

Seva Sadan; Bombay (1885)

Indian National Social Conference; Bombay (1887) Deva Samaj; Lahore (1887)

Ahmadiya Movement; Qadiani in Punjab (1889)

Behramji M. Malabari

M.G. Ranade, Raghunath Rao Shiva Narain Agnihotri

Mirza Ghulam Ahrnad (1839– 1908)–founder

Madras Hindu Madras (1892)

Association; Viresialingam Pantulu

Against child marriages, forced widowhood; to help socially exploited women Social reform

Religious ideas closer to those. of Brahmo Samaj; favoured a social code of conduct that was against bribe-taking, gambling, alcohol consumption, and having non-vegetarian food. Defended Islam from attacks by Christian missionaries, Hindu revivalists; belief in a universal religion; Ghulam Ahmad proclaimed himself as a Messiah and as an incarnation of Lord Krishna. Social purity movement; against devadasi system and oppression of widows.

o a  
n a

tJ 1)

Name of the Movement/ Organisation and Place

'►

N

Ramakrishna Mission founded in Bengal (centres at Belur and Mayavati became focal points 1897)

Bharat Dharma Mahan-mandala; Benaras (1902)

The Servants of India Society; Bombay (1905) Poona Seva Sadan (1909)  
Nislikam Karma Math (Monastery of Disinterested Work); Pune (1910)

People Associated with it

Nature and Objectives, and Media Efforts

Vivekananda (originally Narendranath Dutta), 1863-1902 (its founder); Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1834-86)—Vivekananda's guru

Madan Mohan Malaviya, Deen Dayal Sharma, Gopal Krishna Gokhale (founders)

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

G.K. Devadhar and Ramabai Ranade Dhondo Keshav Karve

Sought to revive Hinduism based on ancient India's religious texts and concepts (of Vedanta, etc); against caste restrictions, oppression, superstition in Hinduism, aimed to uplift women and overhaul the education system. Orthodox Hindus' (Sanatandharinis') organisation that opposed the Arya Samaj's teachings. Famine relief and improving tribals' condition in particular. Economic uplift; employment for women. Educational progress of women; improving widows' condition. Founded a women's university in Pune—now in Bombay.

O

Q

a'

Bharat Stri Mandal; Calcutta Saralabala Devi Choudharani  
(1910) Social Service League (1911) Narayan Malhar Joshi  
Seva Samiti; Allahabad (1914) Hridayanatl, Kunzru  
The Indian Women's Association; Annie Besant tion; Madras (1917)

Women's education and emancipation. Improving the condition of the common masses; opened schools, libraries. Improving the status of the suffering classes

through social service, education. Upliftment of Indian women; annual conferences (All India Women's Conferences) were held.

## CASTE MOVEMENTS

Movement/Year/Region

Causes and Consequences

1.

2.

Satyashodhak Movement, Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by Jyotiba Phule (1873; Maharashtra) Aravippuram Movement, led by Shri Narayana Guru (1888; Kerala)

3. Justice Party Movement led by Dr T.M. Nair, P. Tyagaraja Chetti and C.N. Mudalair on behalf of intermediate castes (1916; Madras)

4. Nair Movement led by C.V. Raman Pillai, K. Rama Krishna Pillai, and M. Padmanabha Pillai (1891; Kerala)

5. Self-Respect Movement led by E. V. Ramaswami Naicker or Periyar (1925; Tamil Nadu)

Against brahminic domination and for the emancipation of low castes, untouchables and widows. For the rights of the depressed classes (especially the Ezhavas or Iravas of Kerala); the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogum was set up in 1902-1903. Against domination of brahmins in government service, education and political field; the South Indian Liberation Federation (SILF) was formed in 1916; the efforts yielded in the passing of 1930 Government Order providing reservations to groups. Against domination of brahmins; the Malayali Memorial was formed by Raman Pillai in 1891 and Nair Service Society by Padmanabha Pillai was set up in 1914. Against caste bias by brahmins; Kudi Arasu journal was started by Periyar in 1910.

021

,s4... ..

7'

6. Nadar Movement by the untouchable Shanans who imitated the kshatriya customs to emerge as the Nadars (Tamil Nadu)

7. The Depressed Classes (Mahars) Movement led by B.R. Ambedkar (1924; Maharashtra)



8. Congress' Harijan Movement (1917 onwards)

9. Kaivartas' Movement by Kaivartas who later became the Mahishyas (1897 onwards; Midnapore, Bengal)

Against social bias and to promote educational and social welfare among the Nadars; the Nadar Mahajan Sangam was formed in 1910. For the upliftment of the untouchables; founded the Depressed Classes Institution in 1924, a Marathi fortnightly Bahiskrit Bharat in 1927, the Samaj Samta Sangh in 1927, the Scheduled Caste Federation in 1942 to propagate their views. For elevating the social status of the lower and backward classes; All-India Anti-Untouchability League was established in 1932; the weekly Harijan was founded by Gandhi in 1933. Founded the Jati Nirdharani Sabha (1897) and the Mahishya Samiti (1901).

W

49

i  
f r

,

4.

5.

#### PEASANT MOVEMENTS

Movement / Year / Region

1. Titu Mir's Movement, under leadership of Mir Nathar Ali or Titu Mir (1782-1831; West Bengal) 2. Pagal Panthis Movement of the Hajong and Garo tribes under the leadership of Karam Shah and Tipu Shah (1825-1835; Mymensingh district, earlier in Bengal) 3. Moplah Uprisings (1836-1854; Malabar)

Indigo Revolt by Bengal indigo cultivators led by Degambar and Bishnu Biswas (1859-1860; Nadia district) Deccan Peasants' Uprising by the Maratha peasants (1875; Kardeh village and Poona in Maharashtra) Phadke's Ramosi Uprising by Ramosi peasants led by Wasudeo Balwant Phadke (1877-1887; Maharashtra)

#### Causes and Consequences

Against Hindu landlords who imposed beardtax on the Farazis.  
Against hike in rents; the movement was violently suppressed.

Against rise in revenue demand and reduction of field size. Against terms imposed by European indigo planters; Indigo Commission was set up

in 1860 to view the situation. Against corrupt practices of Gujarati and Marwari moneylenders; Agriculturists' Relief Act of 1879 was passed. Against the British failure to take up antifamine measures.

O

a'

8.

Pabna Agrarian Uprising led by Shah Chandra Roy, Shambhu Pal, Khoodi Mollah and supported by B.C. Chatterjee and R.C. Dutt (1873; Pabna district, East Bengal, now in Bangladesh) Punjab Peasants' Revolt (during the last decade of the 19th century, Punjab)

9. Champaran Satyagraha by peasants of Champaran (1917; Bihar)

10. Kheda Satyagraha by peasants of Kheda, led by Gandhi (1918; Gujarat)

11. Bardoli Satyagraha by the Kunbi-Patidar land-owning peasants and untouchables, supported by Mehta brothers, Vallabhbhai Patel (1928; Surat, Gujarat)

Against policies of zamindars to prevent

occupants from acquiring occupancy

Tights; the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was passed.

Against prospects of losing their land; the Punjab Land Alienation Act, 1900 was passed, which imposed regulations on sale and mortgage of land and revenue demands. Against the tinkathia system imposed by the European indigo planters; the Charnparan Agrarian Act abolished the tinkathia system. Against ignored appeals for remission of land revenue in case of crop failures; the demands were finally fulfilled. Against oppression by upper castes and hike in revenue by 22 per cent by the Bombay Government; the revenue was brought down to 6.03 per cent.

a

6 z

ep

UI

Movement Year Region

Causes and Consequences

12. Eka Movement by members of Pasi and Ahir castes (1921-22; Hardoi, Barabanki and Sitapur districts) 13. Bakasht Movement (1936; Bihar)

14. Tebhaga Movement by poor peasants and tenants and bargardars or share-croppers (Bengal) 15. Telangana insurrection (1946-51; Hyderabad)

Against hike in rents.

Against the zamindars' policies regarding occupancy rights. Against zamindars and moneylenders; Bargardari Bill was passed. Against practices of money lenders and officials of the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Q

a'

#### NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALS

Name of the Paper/Journal

Year and Place from which Published

Name of the Founder/ Editor

Bengal Gazette (also Calcutta General Advertiser), weekly India Gazette

Madras Courier (First paper from Madras) Bombay Herald (First paper from Bombay) Indian Herald (in English)

Digdarshana (First Bengali monthly) Calcutta Journal Bengal Gazette (First Bengali newspaper)

1780, Calcutta

1787, Calcutta 1784, Madras 1789, Bombay 1795, Madras

1818, Calcutta

1818 1818, Calcutta

Started by James Augustus Hicky (Irishman)

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio associated with it.

Started by R. Williams (Englishman) and published by Humphreys

Started by J.S. Buckingham Harishchandra Ray

o a r a

11 1i i

Name of the  
the Founder/  
Paper/Journal  
Editor

Year and Place

Name of

from which Published

Sambad Kauriudi 1821  
 Raja Rammohan Roy  
 (Weekly in Bengali)  
 Mirat-ul-Akbar 1822, Calcutta  
 Raja Rammohan Roy  
 (First journal in Persian)  
 JP.In-i-Jaltan Nurnah 1822, Calcutta  
 An English firm  
 (First paper in Urdu)  
 Banga-Duta (a weekly 1822, Calcutta  
 Ramrnohan Roy, Dwarkanath  
 in four languages—English, Tagore and  
 others  
 Bengali, Persian, Hindi)  
 Bombay Samachar 1822, Bombay  
 —  
 (First paper in Gujarati)  
 East Indian (daily) 19th century  
 Henry Vivian Derozio  
 Bombay Times (from 1861 1838, Bombay  
 Foundation laid by Robert  
 onwards, The Times of India) Knight,  
 started by Thomas  
 Bennett.  
 Rast Goftar 1851  
 Dadabhai Naoroji  
 (A Gujarati fortnightly)  
 Hindu Patriot 1853, Calcutta  
 Girishchandra Ghosh (later,  
 Harishchandra Mukerji became  
 owner-cum-editor)

0

a

Somapralcasha (First Bengali political paper) Indian Mirror  
 (fortnightly— first Indian daily paper in English) Bengalee (this, and  
 Amrita Bazar Patrika—the first vernacular papers) National Paper  
 Madras Mail (First evening paper in India) Amrita Bazar Patiika  
 (Bengali in the beginning, later English, a daily) Bangadarshana (in  
 Bengali) Indian Statesman (later, The Statesman) The Hindu (in  
 English)— started as weekly  
 Tribune (daily)

1858, Calcutta

Early 1862, Calcutta

1862, Calcutta

1865, Calcutta 1868, Madras

1868, Jessore District

1873, Calcutta 1875, Calcutta  
1878, Madras

1881, Lahore

Dwarkanath Vidyabhushan Deyendranath Tagore

Girishchandra Ghosh (taken over by S.N. BonnerjeeBanerjeein 1879)  
Devendranath Tagore

Sisirkumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh  
Bankimchandra Chatterji Started by Robert Knight  
G.S. Aiyar, Viraraghavachari and Subba Rao Pandit (among the founders)  
Dayal Singh Majeetia

PZI ra

a

Name of the Paper/Journal

Year and Place from which Published

Name of the Founder/ Editor

Kesari (Marathi daily) and Maharatta (English weekly)

Swadeshanzitram (a Tamil paper) Paridasak (a weekly) Yugantar  
Sandhya Kal Indian Sociologist Bande Mataram Talvar Free Hindustan  
Ghadr Reshwa

1881, Bombay

Madras

1886 1906, Bengal

1906, Bengal 1906, Maharashtra London Paris Berlin Vancouver San  
Francisco Before 1908

Tilak, Chiplunkar, Agarkar (before Tilak, Agarkar and Prof Kelkar were  
the editors respectively) G.S. Aiyar

Bipin Chandra Pal (publisher) Barindra Kumar Ghosh and Bhupendranath  
Dutta Brahmabandhab Upadhyay

Shyamji Krishnavarma Madam Bhikaji Cama Virendranath Chattopadhyay  
Taraknath Das Ghadr Party Ajit Singh

0

-t

a'

Bombay Chronicle (a daily)

The Hindustan Times

The Milap (Urdu daily) Leader (in English) Kirti Bahishkrit Bharat  
(Mara thi fortnightly) Kudi Arasu (Tamil)

Kranti Langal and Ganabani Bandi Jivan National Herald (daily)

1913, Bombay

1920, Delhi 1923, Lahore 1926, Punjab 1927

1910 1927, Maharashtra 1927, Bengal Bengal 1938

Started by Pherozeshah Mehta, Editor-B.G. Horniman (Englishman) Founded  
by Panikkar as part of the Akali Dal Movement Founded by MK. Chand  
Madan Mohan Malaviya Santosh Singh B.R. Ambedkar  
E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar) S.S. Mirajkar, K.N. Joglekar, S.V.  
Gha te Gopu Chakravarti and Dharani Goswami Sachindranath Sanyal  
Started by Jawaharlal Nehru

a  

a

Spectrum Books Private Limited

1195

UPSC CIVIL SERVICES PRELIMS 2012 1. Handbook of General Studies for  
Civil Services

Preliminary Paper-i 2. Handbook of General Studies for Civil Services  
Preliminary Paper-II

STATE CIVIL SERVICES PRELIMS 2012 3. Indian History (Optionals) 4.  
Political Science (Optionals) 5. Public Administration (Optionals) 6.  
Sociology (Optionals)

CIVIL SERVICES MAINS 2011 7. A Brief History of Modern India 8. Facets  
of Indian Culture 9. Gandhi, Nehru, Tagore & Other Eminent  
Personalities of Modern India 10. Constitution of India and Indian  
Poity 11. International Organisations, Conferences and Treaties 12.  
Indian Economy 13. Geography of India 14. Science and Technology in  
India 15. Statistical Analysis, Graphs and Diagrams 16. Comprehensive  
History of Modern India (Optionals) 17. Historical Atlas of India  
(Optionals) 18. Geography (Optionals)

SPECTRUM'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERIES 19. A Book of Essays 20. A Book  
of Short Essays 21. A New Approach to English Grammar 22.  
Comprehension and Precis

SPECTRUM'S LITSCAN 24. Critical Evaluation of T.S. Eliot's Poems 25.  
Critical Evaluation of W.B. Yeats' Poems 26. Huckleberry Finn - Mark  
Twain 27. Philip Larkin Critical Evaluation of Selected Poems  
OTHERS 28. Business GK 29. The Medi:1 Effect 30. Philosophers from  
Socrates to Sartre 31. Scientists from Pythagoras to Hubble

NO VPP ORDERS PLEASE SEND YOUR ORDERS WITH FULL: AMOUNT (AFTER 15%  
DISCOUNT) BY MO/DD IN FAVOJJR OF  
SPECTRUM BOOKS PVT. LTD.

635

- 555    • 535    355    • 335
- 220    • 215    180    320    z325}
- 405    • 325    • 335    225    • 405    • 175    • 625
- 275    • 60    185    7    75    395
- 195    • 175    • 175    • 105
- 75    • 265    • 135    • 135