

UNIT 12 VALUES OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will,

have idea of some of the important values which came in and through the national movement,

be able to assess how these values developed, and
pin point the contrasting roles played by the British and the nationalists in the development of these values.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

As you have learnt in Units 11 and 12, the struggle against British imperialism was the central theme of the national movement. But the basic essence of the movement was not confined only to anti-imperialism it also upheld and preached universally accepted values of secularism, socialism, democracy and humanism. Not only that, it also simultaneously practised and thereby popularised these values. A sustained propagation of these values finally led to their incorporation in the constitution of India. In this Unit you are going to familiarise yourself with the values of the national movement.

12.2 SECULARISM

India is the home of major religions and during the course of history has emerged as a truly plural society. People in India believe deeply in religion which influences their way of life. In such a situation strong tolerance of religious differences **only** can avoid social disharmony and conflicts. A policy of divide and rule, as followed by the British, could, in this context, engineer feelings of religious conflicts and cleavages. The nationalist leadership had correctly responded to this challenge by strengthening the value of secularism in a multi-religious society.

12.2.1 What is Secularism?

Secularism in India meant four things:

- i) First, the nationalist leadership preached and tried to promote the spirit of religious tolerance among the people.
- ii) Second many reforms movements were undertaken to remove superstition and blind faith among the believes.
- iii) Third, equality of all religions was emphasised by the nationalist leadership.
- iv) Fourth, separation of religion and politics was sought to be emphasised.

12.2.2 Practice of Secularism

Reform movements were started by Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand and Ramakrishna Paramahansa among the Hindus. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan played an important role in reforming the Muslims of India. A three fold method was adopted:

- i) These reformers did not attack any other religion
- ii) They emphasised the rationalist and reformist elements among various religions,
- iii) It was emphasised that the various religious identities were within the higher identity of the Indian nation.

This tradition of religious reform and tolerance was further strengthened by Mahatma Gandhi and Abul Kalam Azad who were believers in religion but continuously promoted religious reform and tolerance of each other's religions. Gandhi, e.g., started the 'constructive work' programme which worked for Hindu-Muslim unity which helped unify the people-a primary task by any reckoning.

The task had to be performed in the face of the British attempt to promote the "Two Nation Theory" and separate electorate for Hindus and Muslims in India. The Indian nationalists responded to this by assuring the protection and respect of religious freedom to the minorities and also by promising that they would build up the Congress as a secular platform. The Indian National Congress fought against separate electorate by mobilizing all communities irrespective of their religious beliefs, in the struggle for Swadeshi, boycott of foreign goods and Swaraj.

Further contribution of nationalists to secularism was:

the idea of a system of national secular education.
Linking the concept of secularism to the struggle for social justice and equality.

12.2.3 Gandhi and Nehru

The struggle for secularism revolved around Gandhi's and Nehru's conceptions of secularism. Their different conceptions must be brought out to show the two traditions of secularism in India.

Gandhi believed in spiritualisation of politics, but, he was firmly committed to the equality and tolerance of all religions. Gandhi derived his politics from religion but in struggling against religious divisions and fanaticism and in emphasising the relationship between national unity and spirit of tolerance, he took the struggle for secularism forward. He made it clear that state should have nothing to do with religion, which is a personal affair. He gave the state the responsibility of looking after secular affairs like welfare, health, communication, foreign relations, currency etc.

Nehru, in contrast, linked the struggle of secularism to complete scientific rationality. Religion for him bred blind faith and ignorance. For him the essence of science was to doubt and to know. So for him in the fight for secularism, there was no place for religion at all.

It is with these twin traditions of secularism that the nationalist leadership fought against communal organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League. It also opposed the British practice of religious discrimination on similar grounds. The strength of values of secularism then, were again in built in the strength and weakness of the two fights.

Check Your Progress 1

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

- 1) It can be said from the above that secularism is
 - a) persecution of one religion by another
 - b) domination of one religion over other religions
 - c) a theory and practice where religious tolerance, equality, freedom from blind faith and superstition and separation of politics from religion is evolved
 - d) a vigorous combination of religion and politics.
- 2) It may be said that
 - a) Nehru believed that religion should be the basis of politics
 - b) Gandhi believed that politics was derived from religion
 - c) Nehru believed that basis of politics had to be scientific
 - d) Gandhi and Nehru shared the same vision of secularism

- e) both b) and c are correct
- 3) List some contributions of the nationalists towards promoting secularism.
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12.3 SOCIALISM AND PLANNED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The poverty and economic degradation of India was a direct consequence of the British rule. In this context two interrelated tasks had to be performed by the leadership for patriotic mobilisation, i.e.,

the leadership had to educate the masses against the disastrous policies of the colonisers.

the people had to be concretely made to understand the alternative solutions to the pressing problems of poverty and deprivation.

The nationalist and the communist leadership went on to define a concrete socialistic programme of economic planning and development. In this the leaders of the freedom struggle were inspired by the development and social reconstruction in the Soviet Union.

Two aspects of economic planning were clearly emphasised and propagated:

First, agrarian India will be transformed and absentee landlordism will be abolished.

Second, planned development will not emphasise the production aspect only. Production was to be linked with distribution.

Nehru further linked up these facets with the national movement. In various annual sessions of the Congress the meaning and context of socialism was concretised and it was conveyed that **Swaraj** would include the principles of socialism.

Practice of Socialism: In 30s and 40s, socialism for the masses assumed great significance. Following events concretised this:

The Kisan Sabhas and the trade union of the workers were formed to organize the peasantry and industrial workers in the struggle for freedom of socialism. The All India Trade Union Congress first met in Bombay on 31 October 1920, while the All India Kisan Sabha met first in 1936. Many important leaders came to be associated with the Kisan Sabhas and trade union movement. Swadeshi, thus meant both self rule and socialism.

The pro-poor orientation and concern in the Congress pronouncements and annual sessions. While Gandhi talked of the semi-starved millions and tried to identify them with his simple life-style, Nehru distinctly went on to observe that the Congress represented not only the nationalist urge of India but also 'to a large extent the proletarian urges for social change'.

In 1938 the Congress appointed a national planning committee to work out programmes for industrialization and development of rural society. Development of Khadi and village industries was considered integral to industrialization of India.

In 1931 the Karachi session of the Congress had passed a key resolution on fundamental rights and economic policy. The resolution declared: "in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of starving millions". The resolution guaranteed the basic civil rights of the people, i.e.,

a) equality before the law irrespective of cast, creed and sex

b) elections on the basis of universal adult franchise

c) free and compulsory primary education,

and promised further:

a) substantial reduction in rent and revenue.

b) exemption from rent in case of uneconomic holdings.

c) relief of agricultural indebtedness and control of money lending.

d) better conditions for workers, including a living wage, limited hours of work and protection of women workers.

e) the right to organize and form unions by workers and peasants.

f) state ownership or control of key industries, mines and means of transport.

After Karachi Session the Faizpur Congress in 1936 promised:

a) radical transformation of the agrarian system,

b) abolition of feudal levies,

c) the right to strike for peasant and trade unions.

These events were to consolidate the meaning and value of socialism and planning for the Indian people. The British opposition to socialism and fears of communist conspiracy, as manifested in the Kanpur and Meerut conspiracy cases, only highlighted the difficulty faced by the national movement in propagating socialist values.

Check Your Progress 2

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

- 1) Socialism came to be identified by the nationalists in the 40s as:
 - a) a distant, meaningless goal
 - b) British rule plus planned development
 - c) Swaraj plus planned economic development
 - d) Unplanned development
- 2) By 1936 the Indian National Congress had popularised socialism as:
 - a) **Swaraj** plus radical transformation of the agrarian system, abolition of feudal levies, right to strike for peasant and trade unions and state ownership of key industries, mines and transport.
 - b) **Swaraj** plus agrarian reform only.
 - c) **Swaraj** without the right to strike for peasant and trade union.
 - d) Only right to strike for peasant unions.
- 3) Write five lines on Socialism and **Swaraj**.

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12.4 DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Fight for democracy and civil liberties was to become integral to the fight for Indian freedom. After all the British rule by nature was oppressive, and, fighting for freedom from its despotism meant fighting for democratic values. For this the spirit of democratic culture was undoubtedly important.

12.4.1 Nature of the Colonial State

The colonial state was in the main repressive. The legal and the political system it created was discriminatory and obstructive to people's participation in the governance of the country. Combined with its police and army might, the legal political system only served the interests of the British rule. In this context, the suggestion by some British scholars, that, democracy was a gift by the British to the Indians should not be uncritically accepted. The British did not train the Indians in self- governance through Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935. Rather at every step Indians struggled for democratic participation. And at every step this attempt was truncated by limited concessions.

12.4.2 Nationalist Struggle for Democratic Rights

The nationalists compelled the British, in spite of stiff opposition, to concede:

right to vote,

system of elections and representation to Indians.

At the same time Congress conducted elections within its own organizational structure to inculcate the values of democracy and democratic functioning. Decisions to launch struggles were taken through open debates and struggles were conducted in open. Democratic right to dissent was granted in the Congress.

When these procedures were taken in the mass struggles of non-violent direct action the foundations of these procedures were tested. Though at times certain unilateral withdrawals like the 1922 withdrawal of Non-Cooperation or 1931 withdrawals of the Civil Disobedience Movement pointed to the weakness of these procedures. Nonetheless a definite beginning had been made.

Check Your Progress 3

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

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

1) In the colonial state the legal political system

- a) served the interests of the people
- b) was democratic
- c) had no elements of democratic institutions
- d) had democratic institutions which were limited and made to serve the colonial state, with the repressive might of army and police.

2) The nationalists

- a) accepted the colonial legal political system
- b) accepted the limited concessions of democratic participation
- c) fought against limited concessions and for democratic rights.

3) What were democratic concessions extracted by the nationalists?

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12.5 HUMANISM

The national movement brought to surface a new humanism of the Indian people. Any struggle has its humanistic dimensions which help mobilize people of different concerns in a common brotherhood.

12.5.1 Source of Humanism

The humanism of national movement drew upon two sources:

- i) a scientific rationality, which taught that the backward and obscure institutions like caste, ritualistic religion and bonded labour, sati, etc. were obstacles to human development.
- ii) a sense of cultural identity of India, which meant belonging together the diverse cultural strands of India into the national mainstream.

12.5.2 Struggle for Humanism

The struggle of humanism started with the efforts of social reformers to directly attack the caste system, system of untouchability and attacks on various systems of feudal bondages and sati. While Rammohan Roy had relied on scientific rationality to achieve this, people like Vivekananda or Swami Dayanand invoked the Indian cultural heritage to attack such practices and pointed out the inconsistencies of such practices with Indian cultural values. It was pointed out that these practices had made our culture a handmaiden of exploitation of man by man. Vivekananda particularly stressed this in his little known pamphlet, "Why I am a Socialist".

We also see the growth of anti-caste movements in this period. Mahatma Phule, e.g., organised the lower castes against the dominant Brahminical ideology in Maharashtra.

With the national movement we can see three distinct strands drawing their inspiration from above:

- i) One strand can be identified with Nehru. Taking inspiration from the scientific humanism, Nehru went to the extent of advocating a socio-economically humane system. Accepting Marxism as the basis for such a society, his humanism drew deeply from the socialist humanism of countries like Russia. The essential characteristics of this humanistic system were founded on the basic premise of "each according to his needs to each according to his work" rather than the monetary hierarchies of the west or the backward system of caste and religious hierarchies of the undeveloped countries.
- ii) Gandhi was to stress on our cultural heritage. Rejecting caste and religious distinctions, he used arguments from his religion to justify a human brotherhood.

This understanding shaped his efforts of Hindu-Muslim unity during Khilafat or the terrible days of communal riots in the 1920s and the 1940s. Similarly he coined a new phrase Harijans for the untouchables and actively worked amongst them to promote their well being.

- iii) The third main strand was represented by Dr. Ambedkar. He integrated the more militant anti-upper caste movements into the nationalist struggle and also found them a new identity. Similar role was

played by the 'Justice' movement in Madras or Sri Narayana Guru in the awakening of Ezhavas in Kerala.

12.5.3 The British Role

The British attitudes to the humanistic trends within the national movement differed over time. In the initial phases they supported such humane measures as anti-sati campaign of Rammoham Roy etc. But, with the integration of this humanism with the national movement, there was a complete ruthless suppression. During the national movement phase, actually, one saw the most brutal manifestation of the inhuman system the British rule was. The example of killing hundreds of innocent people in the Jallianwala bagh massacre stands out as the most outstanding instance of their inhumanism. The national movement however gained with the sacrifice of these martyrs as the people realised that a human alternative in the national movement was much better than the British rule.

Check Your Progress 4

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

- 1) National Movement's humanism drew from two sources. They were:
 - a) Pity and love for the downtrodden
 - b) Despair and disgust about the British rule
 - c) Happiness and pleasure about the way the British rule functioned
 - d) A scientific rationality and a sense of cultural identity which taught that backward and superstitious values be removed and a national cultural mainstream be founded.
- 2) Vivekananda said that
 - a) Casteist and ritualistic religious practices were the best Indian values
 - b) Caste and rituals were a man-made creation for exploitation of man by man
 - c) Ritualistic religion was god given and should be followed.
- 3) Mention the three humanist strands of the Indian national movement. How were they different from each other?
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12.6 UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE

The national movement was to reach across its boundaries towards internationalism. In this it continued its anti-imperialist thrust and combined its human and rational values also.

12.6.1 Some Early Instances

From 1885 onwards itself the nationalists opposed the use of Indian army and India's resources to serve British interests in Africa and Asia.

In February 1927, Nehru, on behalf of the National Congress, attended the Congress of oppressed nationalities at Brussels organised by political exiles and revolutionaries from the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America suffering from economic or political imperialism. Nehru was subsequently elected an executive council member of the League against imperialism, which was born at this Congress.

In 1937 when Japan launched an attack on China, the National Congress passed a resolution calling upon the Indian people "to refrain from the use of Japanese goods as a mark of their sympathy with China".

12.6.2 Struggle Against Fascism

The 1930s saw the emergence of a major authoritarian tendency in Western Europe. Pressures of labour and peasant movements combined with the economic depression created an anti-democratic ideology in the forms of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. In 1930s its combination threatened to engulf the entire developed world and its colonies. Britain was also threatened. In this context the national movement had to take a stand.

Drawing upon its humanistic and democratic values the Indian National Congress, under Nehru's guidance, took a stand against fascism. In spite of the fact that the national movement was growing tremendously, India refused to go with fascism to strengthen its battle against British rule. Correctly giving the growth of an international democratic order the first priority, the Indian National Congress, though it did not join the Second World war, refused to give any material or moral support to Germany or Italy.

To conclude, Indian national movement's foreign policy stances were consistent with the democratic and human values it was propagating. It was this consistency which enabled a non-aligned policy to emerge in the post independence period.

Check Your Progress 5

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

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

1) The National Movement's Internationalism

- a) was linked to its nationalist values
- b) was delinked from its nationalist struggle
- c) had no importance at all.

2) The National Movement

- a) supported the fascists to gain an advantage over the British
- b) supported the British war effort
- c) neither supported the British war effort nor did they support the fascists to take advantage over the British

12.7 LET US SUM UP

Following key points emerge from our discussion on the values of the Indian National Movement:

The values of secularism, socialist development, democracy, humanism and internationalism emerged through a process of struggle and were not a gift of the British.

The British, infact, strongly opposed the development of these values and thereby made the struggle harder.

These values were not limited to national boundaries but made their impact internationally as well.

12.8 KEY WORDS

Absentee Landlordism: In colonial India the phenomenon of owners of large lands remaining absent from the land living' perhaps in cities or towns and drawing on large rents. This rent was usually a huge proportion of the produce of the toling tiller.

Agricultural indebtedness: The phenomenon of poorer cultivating sectors of agricultural classes being forever in debt to the moneylender. The moneylender usually, advanced money on exorbitant rates to enable the cultivator to buy seeds and other agricultural equipment. Unable to pay it, the cultivator was caught in a trap, where he had to go again for money. This way the moneylender kept a tight grip on the agriculture classes and exploited the situation in many ways. Anti-moneylender riots of 1876 in Maharashtra were one aspect of protest against this practice.

Constructive Work: Programme for uplifts of downtrodden and promoting Hindu-Muslim unity started by Gandhi after the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement.

Economic Depression: Phenomenon of extreme economic crisis when there is over production and glut. Consequence is unemployment and drastic fall in prices.

Linguistic Formations: The recognized social formations in India by the nationalists with language as the basic criterion for different identities. The nationalists gave scope for cultural diversities to flourish and also brought them into mainstream of nationalism.

Rationalist: One believing in reason. Historically rationalist thought associated with the beginning of Renaissance.

Reformist: One believing in positively modifying or amending society to make it better suited to times.

Separate Electorates: The British move to divide Hindus and Muslims as separate voting constituents and with right to separate representatives through elections.

Two Nation Theory: The theory which says that historically India was composed for two nations: One Hindu and One Muslim.

Uneconomic Holding: Land holding of small size, usually not even producing bare subsistence for the tiller.

12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS/ EXERCISES

Check Your Progress I

1) (c) 2 (e) 3 See Sub-sec. 12.3.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) (c) 2 (a) 3 See Sub-sec. 12.4.2

Check Your Progress 3

1) (d) 2 (c) 3 See Sub-sec. 12.4.2

Check Your Progress 4

1) (d) 2 (4) 3 See Sub-sec. 12.5.2

Check Your Progress 5

1) (a) 2 (c)

SOME USEFUL BOOKS FOR THE BLOCK

Chandra, Bipan 1971: **Modern India**, N.C.E.R.T. New Delhi.

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