

# Colonialism and Nationalism in Modern India

COURSE CODE: M21HS09DC

Discipline Core Course  
Postgraduate Programme in History



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL



SREENARAYANAGURU  
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## SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala



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# **Colonialism and Nationalism in Modern India**

**Course Code: M21HS09DC  
Semester - III**

**Discipline Core Course  
Postgraduate Programme in History  
Self Learning Material  
(With Model Question Paper Sets)**



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MA History



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# MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed “blended format,” a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The Master’s program in History aims to familiarise learners with the complexities of historical research and facts through courses on historiography and research methodologies. Learners will develop skills to analyse historical dynamics, allowing them to step deeper into the nuances of historical narratives and reexamine past events with an appropriate outlook. The curriculum’s interdisciplinary nature is evident in its incorporation of concepts from various fields. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university’s student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Warm regards.

Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-09-2024

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# Colonial Intervention

**BLOCK-01**



# Colonial Intervention in India and its Impact

## Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner would be able to:

- ◆ gain insights into the nature of colonialism
- ◆ analyse how British colonial rule subordinated the Indian economy, culture and society
- ◆ understand the impact of colonial intervention and how it laid the groundwork for the emergence of nationalist movements

## Background

Imagine if someone took over your country and began to impose new rules on how you should live, celebrate your festivals, speak your language, or even dress. They might introduce their own customs and traditions while dismissing or redefining yours as outdated or inferior. With time, these perceptions could alter the way you see your own culture, making it easier for them to maintain their control. This was the scenario that occurred during colonialism. For example, in British India, colonial authorities imposed control not only through military force but also by reshaping cultural and economic structures. They introduced English education, which prioritised Western values and led to the devaluation of indigenous languages and knowledge. By controlling education and knowledge, the British were able to exert a subtle but powerful form of cultural control that helped sustain their rule. The British transformed agriculture to serve colonial economic interests, prioritising cash crops over food production and implementing exploitative land revenue systems. This resulted in widespread poverty and famine. Furthermore, the deindustrialisation of local industries, like textiles, and the drain of wealth to Britain impoverished India and hindered the country's economic development. In this unit, we will explore the nature of British colonialism in India. We will also look into various aspects of colonial rule and examine how these interventions fundamentally changed the socio-economic structure of Indian society.



## Keywords

Colonialism, Agrarian Settlements, Commercialisation, Indigenous Crafts, Drain of Wealth, Deindustrialisation

## Discussion

### 1.1.1 Colonialism

#### ◆ *Colonialism as a global phenomenon*

You might be familiar with the voyage of Vasco-da Gama, his landing on the Indian subcontinent, and how India became colonised for hundreds of years. After the European powers, India was subjected to British colonial rule for nearly 200 years, from the mid-18th century until 1947. Let us discuss the features of Colonialism in detail. Colonialism is a multifaceted phenomenon often reduced to mere political control by one country over another. However, it encompasses a broader framework that includes economic, political, social, cultural, and ideological dimensions. It is crucial to recognise colonialism as a global phenomenon which benefited the leading European powers such as Portugal, Spain, Britain, Holland, and France at the expense of colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

#### ◆ *Colonial subordination*

Colonialism is not solely about political control but includes colonial interests, policies, state institutions, culture, and society. These entities function within a structured framework, which integrates the colony's economy with that of the coloniser and prioritises the latter's interests. The primary aim of political control in colonialism is to subordinate and dominate the colonial economy, particularly through trade and industry. This subordination extends beyond the economic sphere to encompass all aspects of society, including politics, culture, institutions, and ideas. One could observe that colonialism in India underwent three distinct stages, which were influenced by changes in the social, economic, and political development of the colonisers as well as their position in the world economy and polity.

As we mentioned, colonialism in India has evolved through several stages, each characterised by different methods of surplus appropriation and interactions between colonial power and indigenous society. The initial phase was the period of monopoly trade and revenue appropriation, where the primary goals were to establish a monopoly on trade and





◆ *Monopoly trade and revenue appropriation*

appropriate revenue from the colony. The monopoly of trade with the colony restricted competition from other European merchants and local traders. The colonial powers required heavy financial resources for their wars in the colonies and to maintain their military, naval powers and trading enterprises. Above all, the Europeans who were posted in the colonies were also engaged in extortion and corruption.

◆ *Raw material production*

Gradually, colonialism in India saw crucial shifts in the methods and objectives of exploitation. When industrial capitalists sought surplus appropriation, it led to a focus on more structured forms of exploitation. Their interests in the colony were to expand markets for manufactured goods and promote exports. It necessitated increased production of raw materials and agricultural products to fuel both internal and external trade. Colonial rulers aimed to integrate the Indian economy into the world capitalist system, which demanded vital changes in the economic, political, administrative, social, and cultural spheres of the colony. They justified this transformation under the guise of development and modernisation, which involved the restructuring of the colonial economy with a focus on free trade and foreign investment. For this purpose, they enabled foreign trade in the colony free from restrictions and tariffs. Free trade was one of the key strategies that helped them achieve their goal. Hence, the colonial state actively supported capitalists in various sectors such as plantations, trade, transport, mining, and industries.

◆ *Industrial Capitalism*

There were efforts to transform the agrarian structure towards commercial agriculture. The legal and judicial systems were overhauled to enforce contracts and facilitate trade relations. Modern education served as a tool to expand administrative machinery and instil Western values and norms in colonial society. One of the inevitable consequences of colonial exploitation was underdevelopment, which increased the burden on peasants. Overall, Industrial capitalism was one of the major driving forces behind such a transition.

◆ *Industrialisation*

The next phase of colonialism in India exhibited a shift in the global economic scenario, which led to major changes in colonial policies and practices. During this time, industrialisation spread in countries including Europe, Japan and North America. This intensified the global competition of markets and resources. It led to the search for new markets and sources of raw materials. The period also witnessed

technological advancements, capital accumulation, and the search for markets. The larger exploitation of colonies resulted in major accumulations of capital in developed capitalist countries.

◆ *Consolidation of control*

As a further step, intensive control and bureaucratisation over colonies occurred, with colonial administration becoming more bureaucratic. They aimed to implement direct control to attract capital. Surplus appropriation also persisted at this level. The ideology of colonialism was shifted to 'benevolent' despotism. It portrayed the colonised as permanently immature and unfit for self-government. Even though there were efforts to transform the economy, society, and culture of the colony, there were diminishing results. It signalled a consolidation of colonial control, ideological shifts, and continued exploitation of colonies amidst intensifying global competition and technological advancements.

#### 1.1.1.1 Nature of Colonialism

◆ *Cultural control*

The nature of colonialism extends beyond mere military dominance, political authority, or economic exploitation; it is deeply interconnected with cultural control and the strategic production of knowledge. Bernard Cohn, a prominent historian and anthropologist, focused extensively on the colonial nature of the state, especially under British rule in India. He examined the relationship between colonialism and cultural transformation, particularly in the context of South Asia. Later, scholars like Michel Foucault and Edward Said highlighted the intricate links between knowledge and power in colonial discourses.

◆ *Bernard Cohn's view*

Bernard Cohn argues that colonialism was not solely about military conquest, political control, or economic exploitation. Instead, Bernard Cohn views colonialism as a cultural project where knowledge production and control were central to colonial rule. According to Cohn, colonial rule was sustained and strengthened through 'cultural technologies of rule,' which were just as vital as the physical and economic tools of conquest. He argues that the production and application of knowledge were integral to the very nature of colonialism, asserting that 'knowledge was what colonialism was all about.'

Colonial powers like the British in India didn't just impose their rule through force. They redefined and transformed the cultural and intellectual framework of the societies

◆ *Creation of categories*

they dominated. This involved creating new categories and oppositions, such as the distinctions between colonisers and the colonised, modern and traditional, West and East. In India, British colonial rule was sustained not only through military and economic strategies but also through the deliberate restructuring of vernacular languages, the representation of India through archaeological findings, and the study of religious texts.

◆ *Anthropology of British rule*

The British constructed categories such as 'caste,' 'tribe,' and 'village,' which were used to classify and control the population. These cultural interventions were as crucial to the maintenance of colonial power as military or economic measures. Bernard Cohn also investigated the anthropology of both the colonisers and the colonised and provided insights into the anthropology of British rule in India. His work ranged from analysing grand events like the Delhi Darbars to studying the census as an 'enumerative technology of power' that helped sustain British control. This was a big part of how colonialism worked – not just through force but by changing the way people thought about themselves and their world.

◆ *Tools of control*

As one could analyse, the British colonial project in India involved much more than just administrative changes. Bernard Cohn continues to argue how the British used knowledge and culture as tools of control. For instance, the British Orientalists studied Indian languages not to collaborate with Indian scholars but to control and dominate Indian society. He shows how the British constructed an image of India that could be more easily managed and ruled through activities like collecting artefacts, conducting archaeological excavations, and taking photographs. They were ways of exerting control over how India was perceived and understood.

◆ *Role of Colonial law*

The colonial law played a major role in shaping Indian society. Cohn emphasises that the British legal system introduced during colonial rule institutionalised British notions of law and order. This legal system was designed to regulate a colonial society made up of 'others' – the Indian population – rather than settlers.

In the course of history, one could notice how the British moved from a complete misunderstanding of their position in India to fully accepting their role within Indian society. This shift led them to seek territorial control to gain the financial resources needed to support their role. Cohn also showed

◆ *Language as a tool*

that the British initially struggled with Indian languages, which fuelled their misconceptions. However, by the late 18th century, they made a concerted effort to learn these languages by producing grammar, dictionaries, and teaching aids. In doing so, even the grammar of Indian languages was transformed from an Indian form of knowledge into a European object. It demonstrated how language was used as a tool of colonial control to issue commands and collect information.

◆ *Knowledge gathering*

In colonial India, knowledge was crucial for governing effectively, particularly for assessing and collecting taxes, maintaining law and order, and classifying different groups within society. Bernard Cohn explored how British colonial rulers gathered and used this knowledge, particularly in projects like Sir William Jones' Persian grammar and Halhed's Bengali grammar. These efforts were part of a Orientalist project, which aimed to understand and systematise Indian languages and culture. However, he argued that even these pursuits were deeply interconnected with the colonial project of rule.

◆ *Promotion of Sanskrit*

The intricacies of how the British objectified India can be observed in their revenue policies and legal system. Cohn explored how figures like William Jones attempted to recover an 'ancient Indian constitution' by learning languages like Persian and Sanskrit. They believed that understanding these languages was key to ruling India effectively. During the late 18th century, Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India, encouraged the study of Sanskrit among British scholars. Three prominent scholars – Charles Wilkins, William Jones, and H.T. Colebrooke – were instrumental in this effort. In 1784, William Jones founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal with the aim of studying and exploring the history, antiquities, arts, sciences, and literature of Asia. One of Jones' significant contributions was his translation of the Law Book of Manu in 1794, making this important legal text accessible to a wider audience. H.T. Colebrooke furthered this work by producing 'A Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession' in 1797-98, a comprehensive four-volume collection that detailed Hindu legal principles. Sir Charles Wilkins also made a noteworthy contribution by translating the Bhagavad Gita into English, which helped introduce this key Hindu text to the English-speaking world. In 1800, Lord Wellesley, who succeeded Hastings, established Fort William College in Calcutta. This institution was designed to train British civilians in administrative roles. Recognising





the importance of understanding Indian culture, the college included courses on oriental learning, where British officials were taught by Indian scholars, known as pandits, and other experts in the field.

◆ *'Objectification' of India*

British legal scholars sought to organise Indian law based on European philological methods. They reinterpreted Indian legal traditions to fit British legal concepts. This process led to the creation of a legal system in India that increasingly mirrored British case law rather than reflecting the diversity of Indian legal traditions. This process of the 'objectification of India,' where India was systematically coded in ways that made it more accessible for colonisation. By the late 19th century, this objectification was evident in official ethnography, which involved categorising and documenting the vast array of Indian castes, customs, and practices. As a result, India was portrayed as static, timeless, and exotic. It made it easier for the British to control and exploit the Indian population.

◆ *Imperial archaeology*

From the early seventeenth century, India was seen as a major source of valuable commodities for Europe, particularly textiles and spices. However, as British rule in India solidified in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, new opportunities emerged for the British to exploit not only commercial goods but also cultural artefacts. Cohn emphasises that the British interest extended beyond goods with market value. They were also interested in objects that could symbolise and demonstrate British control over India's history and culture. According to Cohn, these included historical artefacts and documents, which were collected to create an 'imperial archaeology' with Britain at the centre.

◆ *Colin Mackenzie's first survey*

One key figure in this process was Colin Mackenzie, the first Surveyor General of India. Mackenzie was responsible for the first surveys of the Deccan region in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, following Britain's acquisition of land from Indian rulers like the Nizam of Hyderabad and Tipu Sultan. Mackenzie not only mapped the newly acquired territories but also gathered an extensive collection of historical artefacts and documents. His efforts exceeded the expectations of the East India Company. He employed and trained Brahmin research assistants and identified the Amaravati ruins, which held significant evidence of an earlier Buddhist history in southern India.

British colonialists' concerns about appropriate clothing

◆ *Control over cultural symbols*

were a reflection of their desire to dominate Indian culture. For instance, the Sikh turban, which is often seen today as a symbol of Sikh religious identity, became an important marker for Sikhs because it was used by the British army to create a distinctive uniform for Sikh regiments. This control over cultural symbols later played a role in the nationalist movements, where Indians appropriated these symbols to resist colonial rule. Clothing was a site of contestation and regulation, as seen in the breast-cloth controversy in Travancore in the late nineteenth century. This controversy, initiated by Christian missionaries, revolved around whether lower-caste women could wear a breast cloth to cover their upper bodies, challenging the traditional norms of the region. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi used clothing as a powerful symbol of resistance against British rule. By adopting simple peasant dress and promoting undyed homespun khadi, Gandhi turned clothing into a symbol of nationalist fervour and a means to sustain resistance to colonialism.

◆ *Redefinition of caste*

When it comes to the caste system in India, Nicholas Dirks, an esteemed historian and anthropologist, argues that the historical encounter between India and British colonial rule shaped caste as a modern phenomenon. Although Dirks does not suggest that the British invented caste, he asserts that under British rule, caste was redefined and became a more unified and simplified idea that tried to fit India's diverse social structures into one system. Dirks traces the history of caste from the medieval kingdoms of southern India through the records of early British administrators and into the writings of an 18th-century Jesuit. He also examines how the 19th-century British census and colonial studies further classified and solidified caste. Also, he looks at how Indian scholars in the 20th century worked to reclaim ethnography, the study of cultures, from its colonial roots.

Let us closely examine the areas where British administrators attempted to classify the indigenous population to legitimise their rule.

### **1.1.1.2 Classification /Categorisation of the Indigenous Society**

#### **Census**

The census was one of the main tools used by the British colonial state to classify and record the population of India scientifically. However, the way the census was conducted often gave a distorted view of the social hierarchy in Indian



◆ *Social Ordering*

society. The British used the principle of *varna*, the traditional Hindu caste system, as the primary method of classification, which didn't accurately reflect the diverse social structures across different regions of India.

◆ *All India census*

The colonial government's descriptions of Indian society through the census were designed to serve British imperial interests. Through showing the diversity and complexity of Indian society, the British portrayed India as a land filled with conflicts and divisions, needing the 'progressive' administration of British rule. The idea of conducting an all-India census was first seriously considered in the mid-1850s, although regional household counts had been conducted earlier. The first all-India census was conducted in 1871-72, though it wasn't systematic or comprehensive, and it didn't cover all regions.

◆ *Flaws in the classification*

The primary method of classification in the 1871-72 census and again in the 1881 census was based on the *varna* system. This approach was heavily influenced by Orientalist ideas, which aimed to outline the social hierarchy in India. In this system, Brahmins were placed at the top of the hierarchy, while the majority of Hindus were lumped together in the *Shudra* category, which was considered a servile class. This classification ignored regional and sub-caste differences among the Brahmins and failed to capture the diversity of Indian society. The colonial administration used both *varna* and occupation as markers to classify people. However, the use of occupational criteria was often flawed, as caste titles didn't always accurately reflect a person's occupation. Also, caste titles and other symbols of caste identity were used inconsistently, which further led to arbitrary and conflicting classifications.

◆ *Basis of classification*

In 1881, W.C. Plowden, the Census Commissioner of India, further categorised the census data to create artificial groups based on major agricultural castes, artisan groups, village servants, and so on. This artificial differentiation within castes served various administrative purposes, such as military recruitment, identifying 'criminal castes,' maintaining law and order, and shaping agrarian policy and legal system. By the time of the 1891 census, the British administration shifted from using *varna* as the basis for enumeration to using occupational criteria, following the proposals of J.C. Nesfield and Denzil Ibbetson. However, H.H. Risley, who became Census Commissioner for the 1901 census, criticised this approach. He proposed classifying Indian people and castes

into distinct racial groups based on physical measurements, such as the size and shape of various body parts.

◆ *Controversies and disputes*

Risley also introduced the idea of classifying castes based on 'social precedence' or ranking them according to their perceived social status. This led to the emergence of many caste associations that challenged their assigned positions, each demanding a higher rank in the official hierarchy. Due to the controversies and disputes that arose from this ranking system, the 1911 census abandoned the scheme of ranking castes but continued to gather information on them. Censuses were conducted every ten years afterwards, in 1921, 1931, and 1941. These censuses continued to play a major role in the colonial understanding and administration of Indian society, often reinforcing social divisions and serving the British imperial agenda.

**'Criminal Castes and Tribes'**

◆ *Identification of 'Criminal' Castes and tribes*

The British colonial administration also categorised certain groups in Indian society as 'criminal castes and tribes.' From the beginning, the colonial state used various methods to monitor and control these groups, viewing them as outside the bounds of civilised society. One example is W. H. Sleeman's 'The Ramaseeana,' a book that portrayed certain groups, like the Thugs, as inherently criminal. In 1835, the British established a special department to investigate and punish these so-called Thugs and Dacoits (bandits). Over time, more and more communities, particularly those that did not engage in settled agriculture or wage labour, were labelled as 'criminal tribes.' This included nomadic, pastoral, and forest-dwelling tribes. The British, along with their Brahmin subordinates, were afraid of these wandering groups. Settled farmers were also suspicious of hunting and gathering people, while high-caste Hindus were wary of those outside the caste system.

◆ *Criminal Tribes Act*

The British had a long tradition of associating forests with crime, which influenced their view of these groups. They believed that certain communities were naturally predisposed to crime, a view that was common among colonial administrators in the 19th century. In 1871, the British passed the Criminal Tribes Act, which allowed for the registration of all members of tribes labelled as 'criminal.' These individuals were required to report to the local police at regular intervals and notify them of any changes in residence. Failure to comply with these rules resulted in severe punishment.





◆ *Attribution of 'criminal' behaviour*

After the 1857 rebellion, many castes that had opposed British authority were also labelled as 'criminals.' This identification was part of a larger colonial discourse where a person's caste determined their occupation, social status, and even moral character. The British believed that certain castes were both typical and deviant, meaning they saw these groups as representative of criminal behaviour. In the late 19th century, colonial officials began to believe that crime was a hereditary trait, particularly in India, where they applied this belief to entire communities. For example, Frederick S. Mullaly, a senior police officer, wrote 'Notes on Criminal Classes of Madras Presidency' in 1892, which was based on earlier ethnographic studies by colonial administrators.

◆ *Anthropometry*

During this time, a method called anthropometry became popular. This involved measuring various physical characteristics, such as height, weight, and skull size, to identify criminals. The British believed that certain physical traits could indicate a criminal disposition. However, by the late 1890s, fingerprinting became a more reliable, cost-effective, and efficient method for identifying criminals. Fingerprinting quickly became the standard practice and was a method used to control and monitor even the poorest villagers and nomadic groups.

### **Military Recruitment**

◆ *'Martial Races'*

After the 1857 revolt, the British colonial administrators became very concerned about military recruitment in India. They developed a theory that certain castes and ethnic groups were naturally suited for military service, which they referred to as 'martial races.' This idea was based on the belief that these groups were inherently disciplined, loyal to the British Crown, and had a natural inclination toward military life.

◆ *Colonial Military Recruitment Policy*

As a result, the colonial military recruitment policy was closely tied to ethnographic classification. This means that the British categorised people based on their ethnic and social backgrounds to decide who was most suitable for the army. For instance, after the 1857 rebellion, Punjabis, especially Sikhs, were heavily recruited into the colonial army. Over time, Sikhs and Nepalis (particularly Gorkhas) became central to the British Indian Army, forming what was called the 'martial races.'

Lord Roberts, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from 1885 to 1893, was a strong supporter of the martial races theory. He believed that people from Southern

◆ *Divide and Rule*

India lacked the necessary military skills and discipline. As a result, the British disbanded eight out of forty Madras infantry battalions in 1882, and by the early 20th century, their numbers were further reduced to just 25 battalions. From the late 1890s onwards, the martial race theory was formalised in a series of official manuals written by British officers with extensive field experience. These manuals guided army recruitment policies until the Second World War. The British believed that members of these so-called martial races were naturally inclined to be good soldiers, loyal, and obedient to authority. That is how the colonial administration used these theories and practices to control and categorise Indian society, often based on biased and discriminatory views. It was part of the larger strategy of 'divide and rule' used by the British to maintain control over India.

### 1.1.1.3 Context of Colonial Interventions in India

Now, let us have a look at the context in which the British entered India and how it paved the way for British Colonialism in India.

#### Transition of the Eighteenth Century

◆ *Transition debate*

The transition of the eighteenth century in India reflects a crucial shift in its history and remains a topic of ongoing debate among historians. This period saw the decline of the centralised Mughal Empire and the rise of regional powers, as well as the increasing influence of the English East India Company. There are two primary debates concerning this era. One is the shift in political power - How did India's transition from the centralised rule of the Mughal Empire to the emergence of regional confederations and kingdoms? Next is the economic and commercial changes- How did the growing role of the English East India Company influence the economic, commercial, and financial aspects of life in India? These debates also touch on the nature of Mughal rule, the reasons behind the empire's decline, the argument over whether this period brought economic prosperity or decline (often referred to as the 'Dark Ages Thesis'), and whether this period represented continuity with the past or significant change.

The Mughal Empire dominated much of India for almost three centuries, but by the early 1700s, it faced a significant decline in both power and influence. This decline not only reduced the Empire's territory but also led to the breakdown



◆ *Decline of the Mughal Empire*

of its once-strong administrative system, which rulers like Akbar and Shahjahan had carefully established. As Mughal power weakened, several independent states began to emerge across the former Empire. Historians have debated the reasons behind the Mughal decline and the rise of these regional states. This topic has sparked more disagreement among scholars than perhaps any other aspect of Mughal history.

◆ *Perspectives on decline*

There are two main perspectives on why the Mughal Empire declined- Mughal-Centric Approach and Region-Centric Approach. Some historians focus on issues within the Empire itself, examining how its internal structure and functioning may have led to its downfall. Other historians look beyond the Empire's central structure and explore how conditions in different regions contributed to the instability and eventual decline of the Mughal Empire.

◆ *J.N Sarkar and C.A Bayly*

Earlier historians, such as J.N. Sarkar, attributed the decline of the Mughal Empire to what they called a 'crisis of personality.' They argued that the downfall of this once-mighty empire was primarily due to the presence of weak emperors and incompetent military commanders. C.A. Bayly has argued that the creation of new wealth and social power in various provinces weakened the Mughal central control. This decentralisation allowed regional powers to rise and become more influential, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of the Mughal administration.

◆ *Jagirdari Crisis*

Mughal decline, as explained by historian Satish Chandra, can be understood by looking at the problems in the mansabdar-jagirdar system, which was a key part of the Empire's administration. By the end of Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, this system started to break down. The Mansabdars were officials who were given jagirs (land grants) in exchange for their service to the Empire. When this system fell apart, it led to the collapse of the Mughal Empire. Athar Ali adds that nobles within the Empire began competing for the best jagirs, but these jagirs were becoming scarce, especially with more nobles coming from the south. This competition weakened the political structure of the Empire, which heavily relied on the jagirdari system.

Initially, it was thought that the decline of the Mughal Empire was mainly due to problems in the administration, particularly in the jagir system. These problems caused a crisis that eventually led to the rise of regional powers. Later

◆ *Rise of regional powers*

studies, however, pointed to an agrarian crisis at the end of the seventeenth century, which sparked rebellions by groups like the Jats, Satnamis, and Sikhs. However, it is difficult to find a single explanation that fits the decline across all regions and provinces of the Empire. In the early eighteenth century, the delicate balance that had sustained the Mughal system was likely disrupted. This led to a period of readjustment among the various parts of the system, resulting in the breakdown of the Empire and the rise of regional powers.

### **European Intervention**

◆ *Portuguese in India*

The search for new trade routes to India was driven by disruptions in the traditional trade routes and the changing political situation in the Middle East. After numerous attempts, European traders first arrived on the Indian coast at the end of the fifteenth century. The arrival of Vasco da Gama in Calicut in May 1498 was the beginning of a new era in Euro-Asian trade. The Portuguese initially dominated this trade by controlling the route to India via the Cape of Good Hope. However, Portugal lacked a strong merchant class, so the Crown took the lead in financing and supporting these overseas enterprises.

◆ *The Dutch and the English*

By the late sixteenth century, the Dutch and English merchant companies began challenging the Portuguese monopoly. The English East India Company was established in 1600, followed by the Dutch in 1602, and later, the French East India Company in 1664. Although these companies were large and powerful, private traders also participated in Euro-Asian trade. These commercial empires relied on their naval supremacy and aimed to monopolise trade. Their activities were mostly confined to coastal port cities in India and did not significantly interfere with the sovereignty of local rulers. Indian rulers often tolerated these European traders because their activities brought in goods and bullion, which contributed to India's economic growth. There were conflicts over control of trade and markets.

◆ *The French*

The French were the first to attempt to establish a large-scale territorial empire in India, a strategy that the British East India Company later adopted, followed by the Dutch. As these European powers competed for trade monopolies and territorial control, conflicts arose among them, further shaping the establishment of European colonialism in India.





### 1.1.2 Arrival of the British and their Intervention In India

#### ◆ *Initial phase of British rule*

As we all know, India was under British rule for nearly 200 years, from the mid-18th century to 1947. Colonial efforts in India began in the early 17th century when the British East India Company established trading posts. As the Mughal Empire declined in the 18th century, European powers, including the British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese, sought to expand their influence. The Battle of Plassey in 1757 marked a crucial moment, with the British defeating the Nawab of Bengal and establishing dominance. Throughout the 18th century, India's political system was fragmented, with regional powers like the Marathas and Sikhs. By the mid-19th century, the British had extended control over much of India.

#### ◆ *British Intervention*

British colonialism had a major effect on Indian society that permeated all facets of daily life. Let us explore the nature of the colonial intervention and its impact on India's social, political, cultural, and economic domains. The British introduced new administrative systems, altered land ownership patterns, and implemented economic policies that transformed the Indian economy. The Zamindari system led to rural poverty, and economic policies prioritised raw material extraction and undermined local industries. The introduction of English education aimed to create a class of Indians aligned with British interests. Figures like Thomas Babington Macaulay advocated for this to serve administrative needs and instil Western values. Social reforms, such as the abolition of sati, were framed as part of a civilising mission but often faced resistance. Colonialism also spurred Indian nationalism. Exposure to Western political thought and discriminatory British practices galvanised Indian leaders and movements. The Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, became central to the independence struggle, which culminated in 1947.

#### ◆ *Economic intervention*

The British colonial period profoundly reshaped India's traditional economic system through various interventions. The introduction of land revenue systems like the Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari, and Mahalwari aimed to streamline revenue collection but led to the commercialisation of agriculture, rural indebtedness, and significant changes in cropping patterns. These policies altered agrarian relations, creating a class of wealthy landlords while marginalising

small farmers and labourers. The introduction of cash crops and the commercialisation of agriculture led to the emergence of a class of wealthy landlords and the marginalisation of small farmers and agricultural labourers.

◆ *Colonial economy*

The colonial period witnessed recurrent famines, aggravated by policies that prioritised revenue collection over food security. The British also engaged in relief measures and public works such as the construction of roads, canals, and railways. British economic interests drove the rise and growth of large-scale industries during the colonial period. Furthermore, stages of industrialisation, influenced by government policies, led to the emergence of capitalist and labour classes. This period saw the establishment of labour organisations and the beginning of the organised labour movements. Colonial rule brought crucial changes to both foreign and internal trade. The integration of India into the world economy as a supplier of raw materials and a market for British manufactured goods altered the traditional trade structure. The focus of colonial administration was on maximising revenue extraction from Indian resources to fulfil British interests. Moreover, the establishment of modern banking institutions facilitated trade, investment, and economic growth, marking a departure from traditional financial practices. The colonial economy exhibited patterns of stagnation and decline, with regional variations.

◆ *Introduction of Western ideas*

The British introduced Western ideas such as democracy, rationalism, and humanism, which stimulated critical thinking among Indians. It allowed the Indians to analyse their own society and understand the true nature of British imperialism. Western ideas permeated Indian society through various channels such as education, the press, pamphlets, and public platforms. However, the spread of modern education was limited, with British administrators often obstructing higher education as it would foster anti-imperialist sentiments. The colonial education system neglected technical education for industrial development and emphasised English. English education widened the linguistic and cultural gap between the educated elite and the masses. Insufficient funding and fees further restricted access, making it a privilege for the middle and upper classes.

Modern industries, urbanisation, and employment opportunities for women in industries and other fields catalysed social changes. Capitalism reshaped social status based on wealth and profit-making. Initially, colonial



◆ *Social change and continuity*

social reform policies aimed to modernise Indian society, primarily to ease their economic penetration. However, over time, these policies changed, aligning with conservative and orthodox elements of society. The British withdrew support from reformers and favoured traditional social structures to maintain stability and control.

### 1.1.2.1 Administration

◆ *The British Parliament and the Company*

When the East India Company started to gain control over territories in India, it needed to set up a system to govern these areas effectively. One of the first systems they implemented was called the 'dual government' in Bengal, which operated between 1765 and 1772. In this system, the Company shared the responsibilities of governing with local Indian institutions. From the very beginning, the British Parliament, the main governing body in Britain, was eager to assert its authority over the Company and benefit from its activities in India. This led to the development of a legal and administrative framework that would maintain the relationship between the British government and the East India Company.

◆ *Regulating Act of 1773*

◆ *Pitt's India Act of 1784*

In 1767, the British Parliament passed a law requiring the East India Company to pay £4 million annually to the British government. However, it wasn't until the Regulating Act of 1773 that a crucial attempt was made to oversee the Company's activities. This Act allowed the Company some autonomy in governing India but required it to report its activities to the British government. The Governor-General in India, based in Bengal, was given the authority to manage the activities of the other British-controlled regions in India, like Madras and Bombay. The Regulating Act wasn't perfect, and there were conflicts between the Company and the British government, as well as within the administration in India. To address these issues, the British Parliament passed another law, known as Pitt's India Act, in 1784. This Act created a Board of Control in London to supervise the Company's activities in India more closely. The Governor-General in India was given more power, especially in matters related to war, revenue, and diplomacy, and the other regions in India were made subordinate to Bengal.

Over time, the British Parliament passed several other laws that further regulated the East India Company's role in India. For example, the Charter Act of 1813 allowed the Company to continue controlling India's administration and revenues for another 20 years but increased the British government's

#### ◆ *Charter Acts*

oversight. The Act also opened up general trade in India to all British subjects, though the Company retained its monopoly on trade with China. In 1833, another Charter Act was passed, which ended the Company's monopoly on trade in India but allowed it to continue administering the territories. This Act also began to consider the possibility of involving Indians in the administration, although no provisions were made for Indians to join the civil service at that time. Finally, the Charter Act of 1853 marked the beginning of the end of the Company's control over India. This Act reduced the number of the Company's directors and allowed for greater British government involvement in Indian affairs. It also introduced a competitive exam for recruiting civil servants, making the process more open to the public.

#### 1.1.2.2 The Civil Services

#### ◆ *Administrative reforms*

The primary aim of the British colonial administration in India was to increase the profits from Indian possessions and strengthen British control. Major institutions introduced by the British included the Civil Service system. Lord Cornwallis established it to combat corruption among English East India Company servants who later assumed administrative roles. Cornwallis enforced strict rules against private trade and bribes while increasing salaries to ensure honest service from the officials. The Regulating Act of 1773 banned private trade for civil servants involved in revenue collection or justice. Cornwallis' Reforms reorganised the civil service, replacing Indian officials with Europeans in important positions and separating revenue from the judiciary. The Charter Act of 1793 required civil servants to have three years of experience in India. Lord Wellesley established the College of Fort William in Calcutta, later replaced by the East Indian College at Haileybury in England. Until 1853, appointments were made by the Directors of the English East India Company. Later, competitive examinations were introduced for the appointments. The Charter Act of 1853 introduced limited competition for civil service entry, with exams and age limits set by Macaulay's committee.

Indians were rigidly excluded from higher administrative posts since 1793. Meanwhile, the British were appointed to lucrative positions. This policy stemmed from a lack of trust in the ability and integrity of Indians. It was seen as a deliberate policy to establish and consolidate British rule. Englishmen were considered essential for an administration based on British principles. The influential British elite





◆ *Exclusion of Indians*

sought to monopolise lucrative appointments for their sons, which further perpetuated the exclusion of Indians. Lord Salisbury's Reforms (1878) further restricted Indian entry by lowering the age limit to 19. The British Parliament Act of 1870 allowed Indians in non-covenanted roles, leading to the creation of the Provincial Civil Service. Still, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) remained largely exclusive to British officials with superior status, salaries, and promotions. Meanwhile, the Indian Civil Service evolved into a powerful bureaucracy, exercising vast power and influencing policy-making. Also, the Indian Civil Service became a target of criticism by the rising Indian national movement for its opposition to progressive reforms.

### 1.1.2.3 The Legislature

◆ *Expansion of the role of legislative bodies*

After the 1857-58 revolt in India, the British government took direct control over India from the East India Company through the Act of 1858. The Crown now governed India, with a Secretary of State and a Council of fifteen members managing the administration. This Secretary of State replaced the old Board of Control from earlier acts and held significant power, including veto rights over the Council. Over time, several acts expanded the role of legislative bodies in India. Indian Councils Act (1892) increased the number of members in the legislative councils at the local and central levels, allowing for more non-official members, although the majority remained British officials. It introduced indirect elections, but the councils had limited powers and could not alter the budget.

◆ *Acts and legislature*

The Government of India Act (1909) or Morley-Minto Reforms further expanded the size of the legislative councils. They introduced separate electorates for Muslims, ensuring representation for different communities but also creating divisions. While the councils could discuss laws, the British still retained control. Later, the Government of India Act (1919) or Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms introduced a bicameral (two-house) legislature at the central level, with more elected members. However, the British Governor-General held ultimate power. It also divided powers between the central and provincial governments, but the most critical areas, like defence, remained under British control. The provinces were given some autonomy, but British officials still had the final say.

Furthermore, the Government of India Act (1935)

♦ *Evolution*

aimed to establish a federal structure in India, with more autonomy for provinces and a larger electorate. However, the British Governor-General and provincial governors retained significant powers, including control over key areas like the civil services and police. Although it allowed for some provincial autonomy, the Act did not create a fully independent Indian government. Later, the Government of India Act (1947) led to the partition of India and the creation of two independent countries, India and Pakistan. Throughout these changes, while Indian legislative bodies gradually gained more members and responsibilities, ultimate control remained with the British Crown and its appointed officials until independence in 1947.

#### 1.1.2.4 Military, Police and Judicial Organisation

♦ *Functioning of army*

The British regime in India utilised military and police forces to maintain control. The army, led by British officers, served three primary functions: the conquest of Indian powers, defence against foreign rivals, and suppression of internal revolts. The majority of the Indian army consisted of Indian soldiers, but all officers were British. One of the reasons behind the success of the British in controlling India with a predominantly Indian army was the lack of a sense of nationalism among the Indians and the loyalty among Indian soldiers.

♦ *Police system*

Another element of state machinery that played a crucial role in maintaining law and order during the colonial period was the police system, which Cornwallis established. The superior posts were also reserved for British officers. They suppressed crimes like dacoity and the activities of groups like the Thugs. However, the police had an unsympathetic attitude towards the people, which led to public dissatisfaction. Reports highlighted police misconduct and predatory behaviour.

♦ *Judicial system*

The British introduced a new judicial system in India in 1793, aiming to dispense justice through a hierarchy of civil and criminal courts and codifying laws. Warren Hastings' reforms established district-level civil (*Diwani*) and criminal (*Nizamat*) courts, presided over by European judges with assistance from local Hindu and Muslim officials. Provincial Civil Courts of Appeal and Courts of Circuit were also set up to supervise district courts and handle appeals, with the *Sadr Diwani* and *Sadr Nizamat Adalats* at the top, serving as the chief courts of appeal. Lord Cornwallis' reforms improved the judicial system by separating the roles of Civil Judge and



Collector. Each district had a civil court presided over by a District Judge from the Civil Service. There were Provincial Courts of Civil Appeals and a *Sadar Diwani Adalat* for further appeals. Circuit Courts, presided over by civil servants, were established. The criminal justice system applied Muslim Criminal Law in a modified form.

The Regulating Act of 1773 established the Supreme Court at Fort William. However, this led to conflicts with the Governor General-In-Council's executive powers, which were eventually limited by the Act of 1781. William Bentinck's reforms in 1831 abolished the Provincial Courts of Appeal and Circuit, transferring their duties to District Judges and Collectors, and appointed Indians as Deputy Magistrates, subordinate Judges, and Principal Sadr Amins. The Indian High Courts Act of 1861 abolished Supreme Courts set up by the East India Company and established High Courts in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay. These High Courts, consisting of a Chief Justice and 15 Judges, had both original and appellate jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases, with at least one-third of the judges being practising barristers and another one-third from the Covenanted Civil Service. Between 1865 and 1875, efforts to standardise the judicial system across provinces led to the introduction of the Civil Courts Act and the Criminal Procedure Code of 1872. However, racial distinctions persisted in the colonial legal system, with different rules often applied to Europeans and Indians.

◆ *Acts and organisation of Judiciary*

The British introduced new laws by replacing customary laws and initiated the codification of existing laws. The concept of the rule of law was introduced. They ensured that the administration adhered to laws and defined the rights and obligations of the subjects. However, arbitrary powers were wielded by the bureaucracy and police. The legal system emphasised equality before the law, applying the same laws to all individuals, regardless of caste, religion, or class. However, Europeans had separate courts and laws, often leading to miscarriages of justice. Although the system was officially based on the rule of law and equality, in practice, the system was influenced by racial biases and commercial interests. For example, British subjects often received different treatment in criminal cases compared to Indians. Moreover, justice became expensive and difficult for ordinary, illiterate peasants as they needed to hire professional lawyers to access the legal system. This situation generally favoured wealthy groups like landlords and moneylenders.

◆ *Rule of law*  
◆ *Racial biases and commercial interests*

### 1.1.2.5 Land Revenue and Agrarian Settlements

#### ◆ *Maximisation of revenue*

When the East India Company gained revenue collection rights in Bengal and Northern Sirkars, it started using land revenue to finance its trade, reversing the trade balance in England's favour. The British focused on maximising land revenue, making it for the colonial profit. The British introduced new systems like land surveys, settlements, and revenue-free land resumptions, along with a more efficient bureaucracy to ensure maximum revenue collection. This often led to increased commercialisation in agriculture, partly due to high revenue assessments. Apart from controlling land, the British colonial state expanded its control over other natural resources and used trade and finance as tools to maintain authority.

#### ◆ *Agrarian tensions*

In contrast to pre-colonial regimes, where land revenue was used mainly to maintain administrative machinery, the British introduced the concept of private property in land, granting ownership rights to certain groups. This policy integrated powerful local elites into the colonial system, making them allies of the British. Initially, the British demanded exorbitant land revenue, fixed in cash, which burdened peasants. This often led them into debt and forced them to sell or auction their lands. These high demands created agrarian tensions and left peasants with little money which eventually led to a reduction in revenue demands after the 1850s. However, whether these changes actually benefited the cultivators remains debatable.

#### ◆ *Disorganisation of the agrarian economy*

The primary objective of the British became revenue collection, with agriculture being the mainstay of the economy. However, several land revenue experiments were hastily implemented with the aim of maximising extraction. This led to the disorganisation of the agrarian economy and society in these provinces. Moreover, the famine of 1769–70 devastated Bengal by claiming about one-third of its population.

#### ◆ *Introduction of the farming system*

In 1772, Governor Warren Hastings introduced the farming system in India. Under the system, European District Collectors supervised revenue collection, and revenue collection rights were leased out to the highest bidders. Despite various experiments, this system failed to improve the situation. Instead, it burdened peasants with higher revenue demands. This further led to their impoverishment and the decline of the agricultural population.





## Permanent Revenue Settlement of 1793

### ◆ Introduction of Permanent settlement

The British recognised the necessity of reforms to improve the revenue system. Hence, in 1784, Lord Cornwallis was sent to India to streamline revenue administration. He introduced the Permanent Revenue Settlement in 1793 to fix revenue permanently. It was first in Bengal, later extending to parts of Madras and the North-Western Provinces. This policy granted Zamindars (landlords) a powerful social group who had previously held revenue collection rights and proprietary rights over the land. Under this system, Zamindars became the sole landowners, while peasants were reduced to tenants who could be easily evicted or have their rents raised. The Zamindars had to pay a fixed amount of land revenue to the British, but they could keep any additional revenue if the productivity of their land increased. This created a situation where Zamindars could profit without contributing to increased agricultural production.

### ◆ Social changes

The Permanent Settlement also resulted in significant social changes. Many customary rights of the peasants, such as access to communal resources like forests, pastures, and village ponds, were taken away. The Zamindars were no longer responsible for traditional social roles like maintaining law and order or infrastructure. Still, they were granted new powers by the British, such as the ability to arrest tenants and auction their belongings for unpaid rent.

### ◆ Exploitation of the peasants

The aim of the permanent settlement was to reduce corruption and encourage investment in land development by landlords. However, as we could see, this settlement disproportionately benefited the zamindars and shifted the burden of revenue payment onto peasants, who were reduced to tenants. The customary occupancy rights of the peasants were ignored, and they faced exploitation from zamindars, who imposed illegal cesses and often resorted to coercive measures for revenue collection.

### ◆ Challenges for zamindars

Although the Permanent Settlement provided financial stability for the colonial state, it also led to widespread default among Zamindars due to the high revenue demands, resulting in the sale of many estates. The latter faced difficulties in meeting revenue demands and frequently lost their estates due to auction sales. However, the British relied on the traditional power structure of the Zamindars to maintain control. It made easier for them to dominate the region without facing significant military resistance from the local elite. Also, the creation of private property on land,

ostensibly meant to encourage agricultural improvement, did not fully materialise. Instead, it led to the collapse of many old zamindari houses and the emergence of new power dynamics, including the rise of a class of rich peasants known as jotedars.

◆ *Peasant revolts*

The impact of colonial policies on the social structure of rural Bengal remained a subject of debate among historians. While some argue for the dominance of zamindars or the emergence of powerful, rich peasants, others highlight the existence of different peasant economies across regions. Nevertheless, changes resulting from colonial policies disproportionately affected poor peasants, leading to a series of peasant revolts against the oppressive agrarian system.

### **Ryotwari Settlement**

◆ *Implementation of Ryotwari*

The Ryotwari Settlement was initiated as an alternative to the Permanent Revenue Settlement. The aim was to collect revenue directly from individual villages and cultivators. The Ryotwari Settlement was a system where individual cultivators, or *ryots*, were granted direct ownership rights over the land they farmed. Unlike the Zamindari system, which involved intermediaries, the Ryotwari system aimed to establish a direct relationship between the cultivators and the colonial state. This system was supported by colonial administrators like Thomas Munro and Alexander Read, who opposed the role of intermediaries in revenue collection. They believed that the state should collect revenue directly from the cultivators, which aligned with the Utilitarian doctrine prevalent at the time. In the Madras Presidency, Thomas Munro played a major role in implementing this system. Even though it emphasised individual proprietary rights in land vested in peasants rather than zamindars, the practical implementation faced challenges. The arbitrary revenue assessments led to peasant distress and coercion to accept unjust settlements.

◆ *Regional variations*

Munro, the governor of Madras, advocated for the Ryotwari system, citing historical precedents. He argued for its suitability to Indian conditions. Despite Munro's intentions to reduce the revenue burden on farmers and increase state revenue, the implementation varied across regions and often led to peasant impoverishment. In the Madras Presidency, the Ryotwari system perpetuated existing village power structures and caste privileges. It strengthened the position of traditional elites. The absence of tenant protections and the imposition of high revenue demands exacerbated peasant



distress and indebtedness. However, subsequent reforms in 1855 and 1864 aimed to alleviate some of these burdens. It led to agricultural prosperity and the extension of cultivation. In the Bombay Presidency, the Ryotwari system faced similar challenges, with revenue rates often being extraordinarily high and leading to peasant indebtedness and migration. Reforms in 1835 introduced a practical settlement aiming to lower revenue demands to manageable levels.

### **Mahalwari Settlement**

The Mahalwari Settlement emerged as an attempt to address the agrarian structure of the North-Western Provinces, parts of Central India, and Punjab. Under this system, the revenue settlements were made either village-wise or estate-wise (known as *Mahal*). In this region, a class of taluqdars and primary zamindars held proprietary rights over vast territories and were responsible for paying the land revenue. Under this system, joint landlords of village lands were collectively responsible for revenue collection, often working within kinship units that managed the land resources. Unlike other systems, the land management here was not hierarchical; rather, it was controlled by kinship groups.

◆ *Mahalwari system*

Holt Mackenzie's Minutes of 1819 laid the foundation for this settlement, where detailed records of rights were prepared after a systematic survey and inquiry in various districts. Influential landowners were designated as *Lambardars*, individuals listed in the collector's register as responsible for paying the land revenue to the state. All the proprietors within a Mahal were both individually and collectively accountable for the payment of the assessed land revenue.

◆ *Payment of revenue*

Like the Ryotwari system, the revenue assessments under the Mahalwari system were periodically revised. Regulation VII of 1822 aimed to vest joint proprietary rights in land with village communities where possible. This shifted British preference away from taluqdars towards primary zamindars and village communities. However, the implementation of this settlement was marred by confusion and corruption. This led to over-assessment and peasant distress aggravated by the agricultural depression of 1828. Later, the reforms in Regulation XI of 1833 introduced a revised system. It featured a detailed survey to assess revenue and revenue sharing among co-sharing bodies. Taluqdars faced hostility,

◆ *Periodical revision*

with many dispossessed and pensioned off. It paved the way for significant social and economic upheaval. Despite attempts to flatten social structures, village communities suffered from high revenue demands, mounting debt, and dispossession, particularly in commercialised districts.

While the effects of the changes brought by these revenue settlements varied regionally and were less spectacular than imagined, they nonetheless altered the rights, obligations, and powers of different social groups and classes within agrarian society. Grievances stemming from these changes contributed to agrarian disturbances throughout the first century of British rule in India.

◆ *Agrarian disturbances*

### 1.1.2.6 Agriculture

Colonial policies on Indian agriculture were not aimed at improving agriculture but rather at extracting surplus for their benefit. It led to significant changes in land relationships and the economic structure of the country. The introduction of revenue systems, such as the Zamindari and Ryotwari systems, heavily burdened peasant cultivators. It forced them into high rents and illegal dues. The emergence of moneylenders as influential economic and political forces further exacerbated the situation. The colonial government indirectly supported moneylenders, as they facilitated revenue collection and export of agricultural produce.

◆ *Revenue system*  
◆ *Emergence of Money lenders*

The dominance of landlordism was another menace in agrarian relationships. Land transfers on a large scale led to this dominance. Furthermore, there was a proliferation of intermediate rent receivers through subinfeudation, exacerbating the exploitative nature of land tenure. This resulted in regressive agrarian relations, with new social classes such as landlords, intermediaries, and moneylenders dominating, while tenants-at-will, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers faced exploitation.

◆ *Dominance of new social classes*

Colonialism shaped the new agrarian structure, neither purely capitalist nor feudal and yet exhibited characteristics of both. It reflected the semi-feudal and semi-colonial nature of the new agrarian system. Colonial policies did not encourage modernisation or improvement of agricultural practices. Instead, it led to stagnation in agricultural production and significant declines in overall agricultural production per capita and food grain production.

◆ *Stagnation and decline in production*

### Commercialisation of Agriculture





◆ *Cultivation of cash crops*

The commercialisation of agriculture in India is often seen as a step towards capitalist agriculture. External factors have influenced it and have not always benefited the peasant society. In the case of crops like indigo in eastern India, the initiative came from the Company's government, which provided advances to planters to cultivate indigo using coercive methods on the lands of local peasants. This led to friction and eventually to the Indigo Rebellion in 1859–60. Similarly, peasants were sometimes compelled to cultivate cash crops like cotton and Jute due to high revenue demands, the need to pay revenue and rent in cash, and debt servicing. However, there was also a profit motive behind their choice of crops, as indicated by the positive correlation between crop prices and acreage cultivated. Wealthier peasants were better positioned to take advantage of market opportunities, but they, too, remained vulnerable to market fluctuations.

◆ *Cotton and Jute*

In western India, cotton cultivation expanded during the cotton boom in the 1860s caused by the American Civil War. It led to brief period of prosperity in the Deccan cotton belt. However, this prosperity quickly disappeared after the war ended. This led to famine and agrarian riots in the 1870s. Similarly, jute cultivation in eastern India arose as peasants sought to earn more income. Still, the primary producers often did not benefit from the boom in the jute market between 1906 and 1913. Jute manufacturers and exporters, many of whom were British, wielded significant power as purchasers of raw jute, limiting the bargaining power of jute growers.

### **Agriculture, Irrigation and Famine**

◆ *Lack of agricultural development*

The extent to which British policies can be held responsible for large-scale economic changes in India remains a contentious issue. While some argue that colonial India experienced positive economic growth, others contend that the colonial nature of policies was geared towards serving the needs of the British economy and hindered India's development. The presence or absence of critical resources, such as investment in irrigation, education, and healthcare, played a crucial role in determining regional development or the lack thereof. The colonial state took limited initiative and invested inadequately in the agricultural development of India. While some irrigation canals were constructed in certain regions of northern, northeastern, and south-western India, especially in areas under non-permanent Settlement, the overall progress was insufficient. Between 1900 and 1939, the area under irrigation nearly doubled, but this growth was

only in absolute terms. By the time of India's independence in 1947, only a quarter of the total cropped area was under public irrigation systems. Public investment in irrigation was primarily driven by profitability considerations and aimed at extreme contingencies like famine prevention rather than comprehensive agricultural development.

◆ *Static agricultural yields*

As a result, public irrigation facilities remained inadequate, benefitting only a few privileged sections of the peasantry. Canal rates were often high, favouring the more prosperous farmers while leaving the poor as tenants at will. Despite some improvements in productivity and technological innovations, such developments largely benefitted privileged peasants and contributed to the production of cash crops in certain areas. Agricultural yields in colonial India remained largely static, and between 1920 and 1947, food crop production lagged behind the rate of population growth. Near-famine conditions were not uncommon during this period. For instance, there was a major famine in Bengal in 1943, when two to three million people perished. This indicated the failure of colonial policies to address the agricultural needs of the population and ensure food security.

◆ *Impact of commercialisation of agriculture*

Some scholars argue that the commercialisation of agriculture did not uniformly benefit the majority of peasants. Hence, it would be premature to interpret it as a transition to a capitalist mode of production, which was characterised by the emergence of a powerful rural capitalist class and the proletarianisation of the peasantry. Instances such as the crash of the jute economy in the 1930s, followed by the devastating Bengal famine of 1943, demonstrate the risks associated with reliance on cash crops and the complexities of their relationship with food security. While it's challenging to establish a direct causal link between commercialisation and famines, the shift towards cash crops in certain areas might have displaced food grain production, impacting overall output. However, this phenomenon was localised, and food crops continued to be cultivated on a significant portion of cropped acreage. Historical debates persist regarding the extent to which the growth of trade and market integration, facilitated by infrastructure development, contributed to food security and famine prevention in colonial India. The contentious nature of this issue is that events like the Bengal famine of 1943 occurred despite claims of increased market integration.

### 1.1.2.7 Railways

#### ◆ *Introduction of railways*

The introduction of railways in India during British rule is often touted as a significant contribution to modern economic infrastructure. However, the construction and development of railways primarily served the interests of the British Empire rather than the needs of the Indian economy. Initially, railways were constructed under Lord Dalhousie's directive in 1853 to facilitate army movements. Subsequently, the goal shifted towards integrating the Indian market to facilitate British imports and exports. British capital investments were invited with guaranteed interests paid from Indian revenues. The construction planning aimed at connecting internal markets with ports rather than interconnecting internal market cities. It further emphasises the focus on facilitating foreign trade.

#### ◆ *Impact of railways*

Railway construction benefited the British economy. Machinery, railway lines, and coal were imported from England. Moreover, railway construction sometimes disrupted local ecology and led to health issues like malaria epidemics. Nationalists often criticised the constant drainage of wealth through payment of guaranteed interests. They argued that public investments, particularly in irrigation, would have yielded higher social benefits. However, the colonial government prioritised railways due to their profitability. Despite its limited contributions to the development of the Indian economy, railways did cover a significant portion of the country by the time of independence in 1947. It eventually benefited Indian businesses after independence. Above all, railways had significant social and cultural impacts on Indian society, although these were unintended consequences of British imperialism.

### 1.1.2.8 Trade and Industries

#### ◆ *Foreign trade*

Colonial intervention in the indigenous Indian economy led to critical transformations, particularly in agriculture, trade, and industry. The British Indian Government regulated trade and industry to serve its own interests. It further led to the subordination of India to world capitalism. It is argued that integrating India with the world market served imperialist interests rather than Indian welfare. Foreign trade favoured manufactured goods from Britain and exploited India for raw materials. British policies adversely affected Indian peasants and artisans as the resources were transferred from them to merchants, moneylenders, and foreign capitalists. Exports consistently exceeded imports and drained India's

wealth and resources. These exports were largely controlled by foreign entities and conducted through foreign ships.

♦ *Handicraft to machine-made goods*

The British rule in India led to the decline and destruction of urban and rural handicraft industries. India lost foreign and domestic markets to cheap machine-made goods, which resulted in the collapse of indigenous handicrafts. It forced millions of artisans into agriculture and exacerbated population pressure on land. Apart from these, industrial development in India until 1947 was slow and stunted, with major industries like machine-tool, engineering, and metallurgical sectors virtually non-existent. India remained heavily dependent on foreign technology.

**Drain of Wealth**

♦ *Change in economic relations*

During the colonial period, India became a market for British manufactured goods and a supplier of agricultural raw materials. However, during the post-1857 revolt, colonial economic relations gradually changed, and India was expected to finance itself while also providing resources for the imperial cause. India served as a significant market for various British industries, including cotton, iron, steel, railways, and machinery. For example, by the time of World War I, Indians consumed a large portion of cotton-piece goods produced in Lancashire, and a substantial percentage of British iron and steel production was absorbed by the Indian railways. Before World War I, there were no import duties in India to protect Indian industries, which was contrary to global trends. Even after 1919, when policies were meant to change, the Lancashire lobby successfully resisted attempts to raise cotton duties, considering India as an important imperial asset.

♦ *British capital investments*

Moreover, British capital investments in India were significant, particularly in railways and agency houses. The Indian government had to ensure the payment of interest on guaranteed railway stock and debt bonds, leading to an increase in India's public debt. India's exports also benefited Britain and helped to address its balance of payment deficits with other countries, especially Europe and North America. Nevertheless, the Indian army, funded by Indian taxpayers, was used by Britain to maintain its empire worldwide. Military expenditure accounted for a substantial portion of Indian revenues. It further burdened the functioning of the Indian economy. India was considered a valuable asset in the British Empire, often referred to as the "jewel" in the imperial crown due to its economic contributions and





importance.

◆ *Reason for the drain of wealth*

The drain of wealth from India during the colonial period was a significant concern for early nationalists, who identified several channels through which this drainage occurred. These included interest on foreign debt incurred by the East India Company, military expenditure, guaranteed interest on foreign investments in infrastructure projects like railways, irrigation, and road transport, as well as the government's policy of purchasing stationery from England and the costs associated with maintaining the India Office in London.

◆ *Debate*

The transfer of money often took place through the sale of 'Council Bills in London, where purchasers of Indian goods received Indian rupees in exchange for sterling. Some argued that the extent of drainage was exaggerated, with estimates placing it at around £17 million per annum. However, early nationalists like Dadabhai Naoroji contended that even this relatively small amount represented a drain on India's potential surplus, which could otherwise have been invested in economic development within India. Proponents of British colonial rule argued that some of the expenditures, such as investments in infrastructure, were aimed at promoting economic growth in India and integrating it into the larger capitalist world market. However, critics pointed out that India did not transform into a full-fledged capitalist economy under British rule. While there were periods of growth, particularly from 1860 to 1920, and regions of prosperity, such as Punjab, coastal Madras, and western Uttar Pradesh, there were also instances of stagnation.

**Impact on Indigenous Handicraft Industries and 'Deindustrialisation'**

◆ *Deindustrialisation*

The impact of British colonial rule on Indian handicraft industries was a significant point of contention for nationalists. At the onset of British rule in the mid-eighteenth century, Indian handicrafts were a vital part of global manufacturing, supplying around a quarter of all manufactured goods worldwide and serving as key export items in European trade. However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, this export demand gradually declined, and colonial policies further exacerbated the situation by opening Indian markets to cheap British manufactured goods. This led to what is often termed 'deindustrialisation,' the destruction of indigenous handicraft industries, and a reduction in the number of people dependent on secondary sectors. Hence, the rise of textile industries in Britain (and later in India) during the

colonial period brought about a massive displacement of Indian handloom weavers. Since they could not sell their products, they were driven to the rural sector, where they had to perform agricultural labour. The disappearance of export demand and the influx of inexpensive manufactured goods from England resulted in the collapse of craft industries, placing increased pressure on land and leading to pauperisation.

While nationalists emphasised this narrative of deindustrialisation, modern economic historians have questioned its validity. They argue that quantifying the rate of deindustrialisation is challenging due to limited reliable data and the different types of occupations of Indian artisans, many of whom were also involved in agriculture. Moreover, evidence suggests that Indian handlooms continued to produce coarse cotton cloth for domestic consumption well into the 1930s, only being surpassed by Indian mill-produced goods later on. However, recent research indicates that the nationalist position may not have been entirely inaccurate. Statistical data from regions like Gangetic Bihar show a decline in the proportion of the industrial population to the total population over time. Specifically, the percentage of weavers and spinners within the industrial population experienced a drastic decline. This suggests a tangible impact on these sectors due to colonial policies and industrialisation. Let us delve into the detailed discussion of different historiographical perspectives on 'deindustrialisation' in India.

◆ *Recent Research*

### **Deindustrialisation Debate**

Nationalist historians such as R.C. Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji, and R.P. Dutt argued that British economic policies and the influx of cheap British machine-made goods led to the decline of Indian industries, particularly in the handloom sector during the first half of the 19th century. They believed that this transformation turned India into a supplier of raw materials for British industries, which stifled India's industrial growth. Later nationalists such as Bipan Chandra and Amiya Kumar Bagchi supported this argument, considering the employment data showing that de-industrialisation started in the early 19th century. They argued that the displacement of Indian artisans and weavers by British goods. It resulted in a significant loss of employment in traditional industries. On the other hand, imperialist scholars like Morris D. Morris, Daniel Thorner, and Tirthankar Roy argued that de-

◆ *Nationalist vs imperialist*



industrialisation, if it occurred at all, took place in the latter half of the 19th century. They suggested that income statistics, rather than employment data, were more reliable indicators of de-industrialisation. They argued that exposure to the global market brought economic growth and development to India rather than solely causing economic decline.

◆ *Critique of nationalist view*

However, in 1960, Daniel Thorner, a Marxist scholar, criticised the view that Indian handicrafts experienced a measurable decline from the second half of the 19th century to the early 20th century. He utilised census data to analyse the occupational structure of the Indian workforce, revealing that over fifty years, there was only a 1% increase in the agricultural working population and a 3% decline in the number of people involved in manufacturing and trade. Thorner concluded that the occupational structure of India remained relatively static during this period, which contradicted the notion of significant de-industrialisation posited by the early nationalists.

◆ *Morris D. Morris critique to nationalist narrative*

Morris D. Morris further challenged the nationalist narrative, arguing that 19th century India witnessed unprecedented economic growth and a rise in per capita income and attributed this growth to the political stability and infrastructure improvements brought by British rule. He noted that the British established a liberal nation-state, standardised administration, improved transport links, and eliminated tax and commerce barriers. This, combined with a slow population growth rate of 0.4% between 1872 and 1921, stimulated economic growth. Morris showed several factors contributing to this growth, including higher agricultural output per acre and due to political stability, new irrigation projects, increased cultivated area, improved transportation system, public order, and a shift to high-value crops. He also observed growth in the handicrafts sector, particularly the handloom industry, and argued that domestic demand for cotton increased with population growth. Regarding the nationalist view that the shift to metal products led to the decline in pottery and that the railroad displaced traditional carriers, Morris contended that these new sectors generated income and employment opportunities. It compensated for declines in other occupations. He pointed out the growth of modern factories, especially jute and cotton mills, in late 19th-century India, arguing that British policy did not deliberately inhibit Indian economic expansion. Morris concluded that the 19th century saw a rise in domestic and foreign commercial activity due to greater urbanisation, a growing

international market, and a shift to new products like tea. He argued that the introduction of a 'stable modern polity' and 'largely laissez-faire government policies' increased real economic output, refuting the idea of de-industrialisation. This reinterpretation suggested that British rule facilitated economic growth rather than causing widespread economic decline.

◆ *Toru Matsui's Critique*

Toru Matsui challenged Morris D. Morris by critiquing the latter's reliance on statistical data. He argued that India at the time was essentially a collection of villages where agricultural and non-agricultural products, as well as services, were primarily consumed within family circles or exchanged according to long-established social customs. He maintained that the expansion of commerce in the 19th century did not alter this fundamental structure. Matsui asserted that total output and per capita income should not be the sole indicators of economic development and general well-being. With regard to the textile industry, Matsui argued that the cost of weaving for Indian weavers remained high, which made Indian cloth more expensive than British imports. Hence, Indian weavers could only survive by reducing their incomes and shifting to the production of coarse cloth varieties where British manufacturers were not competing. The prices of cloth fell primarily due to the cheapness of British imports, not because of any inherent efficiencies in Indian production. Matsui posited that weavers would have benefitted more if only yarn had been imported from Britain, as this would have supported local weaving activities. He characterised Morris's analysis as a 'delusional interpretation of history' and criticised him for not focusing on the 'drain' theory, which emphasised the economic exploitation of India under British rule. Matsui analysed the situation in India as a complex mixture of indigenous societal structures and Western colonial domination.

Nationalist historian Bipan Chandra also critiqued Morris's arguments in detail. Chandra began by challenging the title of Morris's work, arguing that Morris merely reiterated the imperialist view without offering a genuine reinterpretation. He accused Morris of misrepresenting the nationalist argument, which was not about whether British rule destroyed the traditional sector but whether it facilitated the industrialisation of India. Chandra questioned why, if the 19th century was marked by growth due to factors like a stable polity, surplus land, and rising per capita income, India did not industrialise while other countries without





♦ *Bipan  
Chandra's critique*

these favourable conditions, such as Japan, Russia, Italy, and France, did. He critiqued Morris's reasoning for economic growth, arguing that high or low population growth could affect an economy in various ways. Chandra also noted that political stability and administrative order do not necessarily lead to economic growth but can be used for exploitation. Regarding Morris's point on increased agrarian output, Chandra argued that there was no evidence of new agricultural technology being introduced in the 19th century and that commercial crops occupied only 16.5% of agricultural land in 1891. The benefits of this limited commercial agriculture primarily accrued to moneylenders, landlords, and European plantation owners, who used it as an instrument of economic drain, forcing peasants to produce such crops. Chandra also refuted Morris's claim about the growth of handicrafts, showing that the export of cotton goods from India fell faster than the import of cotton yarn, which led to higher yarn prices. Moreover, the import of foreign cloth increased 12.5 times between 1894 and 1889, while the import of yarn increased only four times. This indicated a decline in the production of Indian cotton cloth. Chandra identified that the Indian economy of the 19th century experienced 'aborted modernisation' typical of a modern colonial economy. This period did not witness genuine industrial growth but rather a distortion and exploitation of the Indian economy under British colonial rule.

♦ *Amiya Kumar  
Bagchi's arguments*

Amiya Kumar Bagchi, a Marxist scholar, provided substantial evidence supporting the nationalist view of de-industrialisation in India. Bagchi argued that three essential factors for capitalist industrialisation are an increase in the national income generated by the secondary sector, an increase in the population engaged in the secondary sector, and an increase in the degree of industrial mechanisation. According to Bagchi, 19th century India experienced a reversal of the first two factors, indicating de-industrialisation. He supported his argument by showing a decline in the proportion of the population dependent on the secondary industry, as evidenced by his case study of Gangetic Bihar. He compared employment data from the beginning and end of the 19th century and analysed Francis Buchanan Hamilton's Bengal Survey of 1809-13 alongside the 1901 Census.

On the other hand, Tirthankar Roy argued in favour of the imperialist view by presenting a nuanced perspective on the issue of de-industrialisation. Roy acknowledged that de-industrialisation occurred in some areas but argued that in

◆ *Tirthankar*  
*Roy's arguments*

terms of income loss, which he considered a more crucial parameter than employment loss, the impact was minimal. Roy pointed out that even though 4-5 million artisan jobs were lost over 60-70 years, representing a 30% reduction in industrial sector jobs, the income loss amounted to only 1-2% of industrial income. This was because artisans who lost their jobs found employment in other sectors, such as agriculture, due to increasing commercialisation. Therefore, Roy contended that it is incorrect to present a case of total de-industrialisation across the 19th century, as the economic transformation was more complex and varied regionally.

## Summarised Overview

In this unit, we explored how British rule transformed India into a colony by the late 19th century and how it brought profound economic, social, and political consequences. India became a major market for British goods and a source of raw materials, with agriculture heavily taxed to serve imperial interests. The British controlled much of India's transport, industries, and financial sectors, with revenues largely funding English officials' salaries. The Indian economy was subordinated to British interests, leading to underdevelopment and exploitation. British administrative reforms aimed to consolidate colonial control, excluding Indians from higher administrative roles and creating a bureaucracy loyal to British interests. The Indian Civil Service became central to sustaining British rule but also a focus of nationalist resistance. The British military and police, led by British officers, enforced control, though often criticised for harsh treatment of the Indian population.

Colonial interventions in trade and industry disrupted indigenous industries and hindered industrial development, making India reliant on foreign capital and technology. In agriculture, exploitative land relationships and landlordism led to stagnation and declining production. The British introduced the Permanent Revenue Settlement, Ryotwari System, and Mahalwari Settlement as the mainland revenue systems, which conferred proprietary rights on zamindars, peasant proprietors, and village communities, respectively. These systems often resulted in arrears, debt, and dispossession.

The unit also discussed the economic and agricultural transformations in colonial India, including the commercialisation of agriculture and the debates surrounding de-industrialisation. Commercialisation introduced crops like indigo, cotton, and jute to global markets, benefiting a few but exploiting many. The de-industrialisation debate features contrasting views, with nationalist scholars arguing that British policies devastated Indian handicrafts, while others suggest economic growth occurred in different sectors. Despite differing perspectives, the exploitative nature of British policies is widely acknowledged.



## Assignments

1. Discuss the nature of colonialism in India.
2. Examine the features of the agrarian settlement system introduced by the British.
3. Discuss the impact of the commercialisation of agriculture.
4. Evaluate the early nationalist critique of the British economic policies in India.
5. Examine the condition of traditional industries during the colonial period, especially in light of recent debates and historiographical trends. Discuss the debate on the drain of wealth and deindustrialisation.

## Suggested Reading

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3. Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India, 1885–1947*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





SGOU



## Resistance Against Colonial Rule

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ acquire an awareness of the nature of the revolt of 1857
- ◆ get introduced to the early resistance against British rule in India
- ◆ examine the consequences of the revolt of 1857
- ◆ evaluate and examine the reasons behind the revolt of 1857

### Background

In 1857, a powerful uprising broke out in Northern and Central India against British rule. The foundation of the British Empire in India was the result of a long process of piecemeal invasion, consolidation, and colonisation of the Indian economy and society. The Indian soldiers of the English East India Company, better known as sepoys, started the uprising, and it quickly spread to many different areas. Sepoys, artisans, and peasants bravely fought for more than a year. Their courage and sacrifice wrote a new chapter in the history of India.

The Revolt of 1857 was much more than just peasant unrest; it stands as a significant example of India's resistance to foreign rule. However, the revolt was not a sudden event; it was the culmination of a century-long legacy of fierce public opposition to British rule. In reality, it was the result of the growing popular discontent against British rule. There was a growing resentment and hostility toward foreign rule among many different sections of Indian society. This discontent catalysed the Revolt of 1857. The Revolt of 1857 profoundly impacted the Indian people, continuing to inspire them in their subsequent fight for independence.

### Keywords

Mutiny, Resistance, Rebellions, Cartridge, Bhils, Santhals, Civilian Insurgency, Annexation, Conspiracy



## Discussion

### ◆ *Role of urban intelligentsia*

The elites of Indian society were more focused on implementing social and religious reforms to transform Indian society from within. Their goal was to provide a clear response to Western criticism. However, the rural population responded to the arrival of colonial power in a completely different way. The traditional elite and the peasantry, who were losing out due to colonial impositions, responded to these changes with resistance and defiance. They made several unsuccessful attempts to reinstate the old order. In contrast to the peasantry, the urban intelligentsia, who were the chief beneficiaries of British rule, actively supported the British.

### ◆ *Impact on Indian society*

The peasant revolts were not unheard in Mughal India. However, they did become common in the first half of the eighteenth century when the Mughal provincial bureaucracy grew strict in its attempts to collect revenue, which affected the peasants' survival. During the British period, this tendency became more penetrating. The British introduced a number of revenue experiments in India. The East India Company's primary aim was to maximise its revenue. The revenue reforms implemented in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had a profound impact on Indian rural society. As a result, a new social structure developed in Indian society.

### ◆ *Emergence of a new social structure*

Although there may be variations in different places, we can use the general model created by Daniel Thorner and D.N. Dhanagare to obtain an overview of this new structure. In this structure, the first group included landlords with proprietary rights over huge estates consisting of many villages. They belonged to the absentee rentier class, who had no interest in agricultural advancement or land management. Rich peasants made up the second group. Rich peasants were further split into two subgroups: rich landowners and rich tenants. The first group (rich landowners) had ownership rights over land, but they were typically within the same village and showed an interest in farming, even though they weren't actively involved in it. The wealthy tenants, however, paid only nominal rent to their landlords while enjoying occupancy rights and the assurance of their continued residence. The third category of peasants was middle peasants, and they might be further classified into

two groups: (a) self-sufficient peasants or landowners with medium-sized holdings who worked their land through family labour and (b) tenants who paid higher rents than the other privileged tenants. The fourth group consisted of poor peasants with small holdings insufficient to support their families, no tenurial protection, and sharecroppers or tenants at will. The fifth and last group consisted of the landless labourers.

◆ *Pyramidal  
Agricultural Society*

Society was primarily structured around production relationships, forming a pyramidal agricultural hierarchy in which 65–70% of the population did not own land, and the late nineteenth century (pre-1857 period) faced significant challenges within this agrarian social structure. The land reforms and high revenue demands introduced by the East India Company had a negative impact on the rural population as a whole in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. All segments of the peasant class across the country took part in a series of violent protests against the British.

### 1.2.1 Early Resistance Movements

◆ *Uprisings  
in Awadh and  
Bundela*

There was a series of uprisings started by dissatisfied zamindars, Mughal officials, or local leaders during the first century of British rule. Kathleen Gough has stated these uprisings as “restorative rebellions”. The local peasants, whose main objective was to restore the old order, also supported them. This included the uprisings of Raja Chait Singh and the zamindars of Awadh from 1778 to 1781, as well as the ousted Vizier Ali, the Nawab of Awadh, in 1799. During the 1830s, there was more unrest in this area, especially in the northern and southern regions of Awadh, which made things difficult for the revenue collectors. Subsequently, a rebellion of Bundela Rajput chieftains in 1842 caused a disturbance to the agricultural sector and threatened the trade routes in the area for a short period.

◆ *Uprisings of  
Poligars*

In the southern regions, especially the Tirunelveli district of North Arcot and some districts of Andhra, the Madras government encountered strong opposition from the native leaders known as the poligars from 1799 to 1805. The Company officials viewed them as mere zamindars with military service tenure. However, the local peasant societies considered them sovereigns who carried the legacy of the Vijayanagara kingdom. Thus, the local peasants in the area openly supported them and even honoured them as folk heroes when they rebelled against the Company’s forces.



◆ *Uprisings led by Pazhassi Raja and Velu Thampi*

In the south, two notable uprisings occurred during this period: the Pazhassi Raja insurrection, which shook Malabar between 1796 and 1805, and the rebellion led by Velu Thampi, the Prime Minister of Travancore, who commanded a large army of volunteer peasants and professional troops. But in the end, all of these armed uprisings were crushed by the British forces. The rebels were later reinstated in certain cases under more lenient revenue terms. According to Gough, “they were suppressed more broadly with exemplary savagery”.

◆ *Rangpur Uprising*

The peasants often resisted British rule on their initiative, with one notable example being the Rangpur uprising in the northern provinces of Bengal in 1783. The revenue contractors and Company officials oppressed the peasants under the newly introduced revenue farming system. They imposed excess revenue demands and frequently collected unlawful cesses. Revenue contractors like Debi Singh were the biggest offenders. He assaulted the peasant communities in the villages of Rangpur and Dinajpur. Initially, the peasants petitioned the Company government for justice. However, when their demands for justice were not met, they banded together, chose their leader, gathered a sizable army, and armed themselves with crude swords, bows, and arrows. They then attacked the local cutchery, which served as a court of law, plundering grain storage and forcing the release of prisoners. Peasants who were Muslim and Hindu engaged side-by-side in the fighting and stopped collecting taxes from them. They gave a name to their leader, “Nawab”, and they established their own government and imposed taxes to cover the expenses of their movement. Warren Hastings dispatched troops to put an end to the uprising in response to Debi Singh’s request. However, after harsh repression, certain reforms were introduced in the revenue farming system.

◆ *Dasnami Sanyasis and Madari Fakirs*

Religion played a crucial role in the peasant movements of this century, providing a discursive space for peasants to comprehend colonial domination and contemplate resistance. Their protest ideology was deeply rooted in their religious beliefs. The first of these movements, the Sanyasi and Fakir uprising, occurred between 1763 and 1800, shaking northern Bengal and nearby Bihar. The Dasnami Sanyasis are known for their martial heritage, and they were engaged in land ownership. They engaged in trading of raw silk, piece goods, broadcloth, copper, and spices. During the reign of the Mughal Empire, the Madari Fakirs, who originated



from the Sufi Order founded by Sha-i-Madar, were granted rent-free tenure and continued to have armed followers. The Company's excessive tax demands, the reinstatement of rent-free tenures, and its commercial monopoly had an impact on both of these groups of armed wandering monks.

◆ *Sanyasi and Fakir Uprising*

During 1769–1770, a famine occurred in the area, and its victims were resentful small zamindars, disbanded soldiers, and the impoverished rural population boosted their numbers. The conceptual similarity between the *Sanyasis and Fakirs*, as well as their reciprocal connections, organisational structure, and channels of communication with their adherents, made it easier for the rebels to organise. But the Company's inability to deal with such wandering gangs of armed monks, who would gravely threaten its beloved vision of a settled peasant society in Bengal, was what ultimately triggered the conflict. As a result, from the 1760s until the middle of the 1800s, the Sanyasi-Fakirs and the East India Company's armed forces frequently clashed across a vast area of Bengal and Bihar. At the height of the insurgency, up to 50,000 people were involved. However, after 1800, the number of participants began to decline.

◆ *Uprisings of Hadis, Hajangs, and Garos*

Another movement emerged in Sherpur Pargana (East Bengal). Karim Shah and his successor, Tipu Shah, initiated a new religious movement among the Hinduised tribes, such as the Hadis, Hajangs, and Garos. The Company's rule was consolidated in this area, and the zamindari system was established under the Permanent Revenue Settlement. The peasants raised complaints against the zamindars' illegal abwabs and the new revenue settlements implemented by Deputy Collector Dunbar. In such circumstances a new government and fair rents were promised by the Pagalpanthi sect of Tipu around 1824. In 1833, the army was required to put an end to an armed revolt that had spread throughout the entire region.

◆ *Tiru Mir Movement*

*Tariqah-i-Muhammadiya*, a new religious movement led by Tiru Mir, emerged in another region of Bengal. He began his career working for the local zamindars as a hired bodyguard. Later, he went to Mecca, where Sayyid Ahmad Bareilwi initiated him. He returned and began to preach Islam in the northern region of the district of 24 Parganas region, on both banks of the Jumna and Ichhamati rivers. The majority of his disciples were from the poor Muslim peasant and weaver community. They were grouped together and identified for their unusual beards and clothes. The local zamindars



tried to crush them by enacting various measures, such as a beard tax. Tiru Mir and his followers overthrew the ruling class, which was made up of the indigo planters and local zamindars. They also established their own government, imposed taxes, and spread fear throughout the region. To halt Tiru's advance, the government was forced to mobilise the army and artillery. On November 16, 1831, the government crushed Tiru Mir's movement and destroyed his bamboo fortress.

♦ *Faraizi movement*

Around the same time, a peasant movement known as the Faraizi movement, led by Haji Shariatullah, emerged in Eastern Bengal. The movement was rooted in the *Tariqah* tradition of the Sufi saint Shah Waliullah's school in eighteenth-century Delhi. It also took inspiration from Shah Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly, whose adherents were referred to as "Wahabis". It aimed to purify Islam by eliminating all non-Islamic customs and beliefs. It also established the Qur'an as the exclusive source of spiritual guidance. The significance of the movement is in its social foundation, where the impoverished Muslim farmers in East Bengal banded together under one particular Islamic group and rebelled against British mill owners, indigo planters, and landowners. Following the death of Shariatullah in 1839, his son Dudu Mian assumed control and organised the peasantry around an egalitarian philosophy. He declared that land belonged to God and that it was, therefore, against divine law to collect rent or impose taxes on it. In the districts of Faridpur, Bakarganj, Dacca, Pabna, Tippera, Jessore, and Noakhali, he established a network of village organisations. He set up local courts as substitutes for British legal institutions and gathered truces to cover his travel costs. Conflicts with the planters and zamindars turned violent during the 1840s and 1850s. Following the death of Dudu Mian in 1862, there was a brief break in the movement. His successor, Naya Mian, restarted the movement on a larger scale in the 1870s.

♦ *Mappilas*

The Mappila rebellion took place in the Malabar region of south India during the 1840s and 1850s. The Moplahs, also known as Mappilas, were descended from Arab traders who came to live in this area and had marital relations with Nair and Tiyar women from the area. Their numbers later increased due to the conversion of lower-caste Hindus, such as the Cherumars. The Cherumars were caste-enslaved people who were freed by the Slavery Abolition Act of 1843, which caused them to face more severe societal issues. The

◆ *Introduction  
of new system of  
land relations*

Mappilas eventually changed into a community of cultivating tenants, landless labourers, traders, and fishers as a result of their dependence on agriculture.

Upon assuming control of Malabar in 1792, the British aimed to improve land relations by establishing individual ownership rights. According to the traditional system, the *janmi* (holder of *janmam* tenure), the *Kanamdar* or *Kanakkaran* (holder of *kanam* tenure), and the cultivator were to share equally in the net yield of the land. The British system disrupted this arrangement by reducing the other two categories to the status of tenants and leaseholders and recognising the *Janmi* as absolute proprietors of land who had the right to evict tenants. Furthermore, as K.N. Panikkar notes, the “peasantry in Malabar lived and worked in conditions of extreme penury entailed by the twin exactions of the lord and the state,”. The condition became extreme due to over-assessment, a heavy burden of illegal cesses, and a pro-landlord attitude of the judiciary and the police system.

◆ *Mappila  
Uprising*

Throughout the nineteenth century, several events in Malabar highlighted the protest and struggle of the rural poor against oppressive and exploitative practices. The primary feature of these agrarian relations was that the majority of the *janmi* were high-caste Hindus, whereas the peasants were mostly Muslim Mappilas. The traditional Muslim intellectuals within this social matrix, such as Sayyid Alavi Tangal and his son Sayyid Fazal Pookkoya Tangal of Mamburam, Sayyid Sana-Ullah-Makti Tangal, and Umar Qazi of Veliamkode, played a significant role on the revival of a popular ideological space where economic concerns and religion interacted to create an attitude of open resistance. Mosques became the centres of mobilisation. The Hindu *janmis*, their temples, and the British officials became targets. Three significant incidents took place in August 1849 in Manjeri, in August 1851 in Kulathur, both in south Malabar and in January 1852 in Mattannur, in the north. The Company's armed forces were called to crush the uprising. But in 1870, the Mappilas rose once more, and the events that followed took a similar course.

During the pre-1857 period, there were several peasant uprisings that occurred solely participated by the tribals. The establishment of the British administration harmed their political independence and rights over indigenous resources. For instance, the Bhils were primarily found in the Khandesh hill ranges of the Maratha domain. After the



◆ *Bhils revolt*

British occupation of this area in 1818, the way of life of the Bhil community was disrupted. A widespread Bhil rebellion emerged in 1819, and British soldiers crushed the rebellion. The British implemented some conciliation measures to appease the rebels. However, the situation remained unstable until 1831, when the Ramoshi leader Umaji Raje of Purandhar was caught and put to death. The Kolis of the Ahmednagar district, the neighbouring competitors of the Bhils, also opposed the British in 1829. But they were swiftly defeated by a large army. However, the seeds of revolt remained, and they would eventually sprout again in 1844–1846. A local Koli leader successfully opposed the British administration for two years.

◆ *Kol Rebellion*

The Kol rebellion of 1831–1832 was a significant tribal insurrection that occurred in the Singhbhum and Chota Nagpur regions of Bihar and Orissa. They had centuries of independent rights in these areas. However, the power of the hereditary tribal leaders was now in danger due to British incursion and the application of British law. Furthermore, the Chota Nagpur Raja evicted the tribal people of the region and sold their properties to outsiders for high rents. Their plea for justice failed to sway the rulers. The settlement of non-tribals and the ongoing transfer of land to merchants and moneylenders, often referred to as the *sud* or outsiders, led to a public rebellion. They attacked the outsider's property but not their lives. In other words, the main ways the peasants protested were through theft and arson. The number of deaths was fairly low. The uprising, however, "wiped off the Raj from Chota Nagpore in a matter of weeks". In order to put an end to the unrest and restore order, the British army had to intervene in the issue.

The Santhal rebellion of 1855–1856 was the most successful tribal movement of this era. The Santhals were dispersed over eastern India, especially Birbhum, Bankura, Dhalbhum, Manbhum, Barabhum, Chota Nagpur, Palamau, Hazaribagh, Midnapur, and Cuttack. They were forced to leave their native region. They cleared the region around the Rajmahal Hills, which they named 'Damin-i-koh' and settled there. The tribal lands of Santhals were subsequently leased out to moneylenders and zamindars who were not Santhals. The local police and the European officials working on railway construction were oppressing them. Their encroachment was gradually driven to a desperate situation. Their familiar atmosphere was destroyed by outsiders known as 'dikus'. The Santhals were compelled to

◆ *Santhal Rebellion*

act in order to reclaim their lost territory. In July 1855, they sent an ultimatum to the zamindars and the government, and they became unsatisfied with the response. Armed with bows and arrows, several thousands of Santhals launched an open uprising against the zamindars, the mahajans, and the government. Fear spread within official circles as the uprising spread quickly. The Company's power was destroyed over a large area between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal. The non-tribal peasants of lower castes also actively supported the Santhal insurgents. The army was called into action, and Santhal villages were mercilessly set on fire as a result, leading to violent counter-insurgency measures. Out of thirty to fifty thousand rebels, fifteen to twenty thousand died before the uprising was ultimately put down. As a result, the British government began taking greater precautions with them. The lands inhabited by the Santhal were divided into distinct administrative units known as the Santhal Parganas, which acknowledged the uniqueness of their tribal identity and culture.

### 1.2.2 Nature of Peasant Movements

◆ *Causes of Peasant grievances*

Several peasant movements occurred throughout the subcontinent, and identifying their origins and nature can be challenging. However, it can generally be claimed that shifting economic relations during the colonial era fuelled peasant grievances, which were expressed in these numerous uprisings. As excess extraction intensified in the eighteenth century, peasant revolts became more frequent. The British sought to develop capitalist agriculture in India and integrate the Indian economy into the global capitalist system. As commercialisation expanded, profit increasingly replaced tribute as the dominant form of surplus extraction.

◆ *Landlordism*

According to Ranajit Guha, one outcome of colonial rule was the "revitalisation of landlordism". The peasants' status underwent a significant transformation as a result of the changes in property relations, which resulted in them losing their right of possession and becoming tenants at will. The British government failed to address the tenancy issue or take action to safeguard peasants' rights until 1859. The fraudulent activities and harsh attitudes of revenue officers compounded the peasants' hardships. They were unable to escape the heavy land revenue demands imposed by the state. Additionally, British law extended the landlords' power to exploit the peasants. Zamindars were permitted to maintain their military strength. The introduction of new courts and



complex legal procedures also intensified their coercive power over the peasants. As a result, complaints against landlords often became complaints against the British due to the perception that landlords were state-protected agents of oppression. Peasants remained under pressure from the state's high tax demands. These factors also intensified the process of land alienation. Due to the rising demand for land revenue, moneylenders and merchants gained more influence over rural society. Growing debt forced the rural population to be evicted from their land. These lands were then transferred to the non-cultivating classes. According to Ranajit Guha, the state, moneylenders, and landlords combined to form "a composite apparatus of dominance over the peasant".

♦ *Attack on Tribal Autonomy*

There were various special reasons for the grievances of the tribal peasants. They benefited from the autonomy of culture, which was founded on an egalitarian mode. The expansion of the British land revenue system completely undermined the tribal world's autonomy. The tribal lands were taken over by non-tribal repressive agents, namely the moneylenders and zamindars. Furthermore, it seemed that the new forest rules interfered with their natural rights. In fact, the establishment of British rule led to the loss of their independent realms of power, independence, and culture. Naturally, the dikus and the suds rose against the outsiders, who destroyed their imagined golden past.

♦ *Perspectives on Tribal Uprisings*

There are differing perspectives on these early colonial peasant and tribal uprisings. The British government portrayed them as 'backward' savages opposing civilisation and saw them as threats to law and order. Later on, nationalists attempted to portray the histories of the peasant and tribal people as the forerunners of modern nationalism. Historian Eric Stokes would refer to them as "primary resistance, that is, an act of violent defiance by a traditional society, usually followed by the imposition of colonial rule." D.N. Dhanagare would consider the peasant uprisings to be "pre-political" due to their absence of organisation, strategy, and ideology. In contrast, according to Ranajit Guha, "there was nothing in the militant movements of the rural masses that was not political".

The uprisings that we have already discussed were not political activities; rather, they were political actions that revealed the peasants' political consciousness in many ways. According to Ranajit Guha (1994), "They first demonstrated

◆ *Peasants' political consciousness*

a definite understanding of the relations of power in rural society and a will to challenge that system of authority". The rebels' attacks on the homes and grain stocks of the zamindars, the moneylenders, the merchants, and finally, the British demonstrated their awareness of the political sources of oppression. We frequently discover that these peasant rebellions tried to redefine the relationship of the oppressed to the language, culture, and religion of the dominating classes.

◆ *Leadership*

It was the rebels themselves who provided the leadership for these peasant uprisings. The leaders could lead with greater ease since they came from the same cultural background as the peasants and tribal people they were in charge of. With the exception of the Rangpur uprising, the mobilisation was along community lines. Different levels of tension between class, caste, ethnic, and religious groups were present in colonial rural societies. These tensions were expressed in a violent state of oppression and poverty.

◆ *Role of religion*

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay states that among the lower classes, religion frequently served as a unifying force, with holy men serving as their leaders and promising the achievement of a new millennium through supernatural methods. The religious leaders used theological idioms to emphasise the peasants' concerns by referring to the loss of a moral world. Thus, their movements found justification in religion. The charismatic leaders were believed to possess magical powers, and as a result, the insurrection was justified by allusion to a superior power, which was consequently divinely decreed. This motivated the peasant community and created a desire for action.

◆ *Idea of the 'Golden Age'*

The concept of a "Golden Age" often evokes a longing for a better past, influencing historical events. For peasants, the idealised vision of a golden past inspired their actions. In the case of the Faraizi and Santhal rebellions, this longing was evident. The Faraizi movement, led by Haji Shariatullah, sought to revive an idealised Islamic society, while the Santhal rebellion aimed to restore traditional tribal rights and resist exploitative practices. Both movements were driven by the desire to reclaim a perceived lost golden age, demonstrating how historical and cultural aspirations can fuel resistance and rebellion.

Throughout the first century of the British administration in India, armed rebellions, social banditry, and general

◆ *Riots during  
1700s and 1800s*

“lawlessness” were widespread. In western India and Delhi, grain riots erupted between 1833 and 1838, representing resistance against the monopolistic practices of grain dealers and the interventionist actions of British officials. Additionally, between 1806 and 1858, rice riots occurred in Vellore and southern India in response to threats of conversion to Christianity. In Calcutta in 1789, Surat in the 1790s and 1800s, and Rohilkhand and Banaras between 1809 and 1818, artisans revolted against the policy of free trade. This paved the way for the decline of the handicraft industry. These uprisings were not always directly anti-colonial activities. These uprisings were all connected to the policies and strategies of colonial power. But the strongest act of defiance against the Company’s authority in India was the revolt of 1857.

### 1.2.3 The Revolt of 1857

◆ *Peacemaking  
in 1858*

In 1857, armed uprisings occurred in several parts of central and northern India. Extremely significant amounts of violence occurred on both sides. In addition to publicly murdering the rebels, blowing them off with cannons, and indiscriminately burning native villages, the British counter-insurgency tactics also included the uprisers merciless killing of white people, including women and children. This is why the Kanpur massacre on June 27, 1857, might be considered a “transgression” since it showcased the native aggression against the Company’s monopoly. The East India Company’s reign came to an end with the uprising, and the British Crown seized control of the India following its pacification in 1858 by a Parliamentary Act. The discontented rural community in north India did join the uprising. The uprising is believed to be nothing more than the ‘sepoy rebellion’ in the Bengal army. Therefore, it is necessary to look at it as both the army’s disappointment and the lengthy process of fundamental social and economic transformation that caused discontent among the peasant communities over the first century of the Company’s rule.

Although the Company’s government had made a standing army since the middle of the eighteenth century, it respected the traditions and customs of the indigenous communities and purposefully promoted the army’s high caste character. The Bengal army was predominantly made up of high-caste groups such as Brahmins, Rajputs, and Bhumihars. The caste rules, food, and travel limitations of these caste groups were recognised by the army administration under

♦ *Reforms in army administration*

Warren Hastings. However, things started to shift in the 1820s when army reforms were implemented in an effort to create a more unified military culture. The reforms of the 1820s and 1830s attempted to develop strict control over the army administration and started to curb some of the caste privileges and monetary benefits. These reforms lasted until the 1840s. These factors set the stage for the mutiny of 1857.

♦ *Use of greased cartridge*

The first signs of the mutiny appeared in late January 1857 when a rumour began to spread among the sepoys in Oum Oum, near Calcutta, that the Enfield rifle, which had recently been introduced to replace the old 'Brown Bess' musket, had cartridges greased with pig and cow fat. The fact that the cartridges required biting off before loading. The sepoys assumed their long-held belief that their religion and caste were being destroyed, and it was an attempt to convert them to Christianity. The myth about the cartridges spread to army cantonments all over the country. Even though those cartridges were immediately stopped from being produced, a lot of concessions were made to ease their concerns.

♦ *Outbreak of the revolt*

On March 29, 1857, a sepoy named Mangal Pandey fired upon a British officer in Barrackpore near Calcutta. When European superiors ordered his capture, his fellow sepoys refused to apprehend him. Although Pandey and his associates were quickly found, court-martialed, and executed in early April, the discontent among the sepoys could not be controlled. The following days saw reports of acts of disobedience, burning and destruction from army cantonments in Ambala, Lucknow, and Meerut; the uprising was finally begun on May 10 1857, by the Meerut sepoys. They assassinated their European superiors and freed their imprisoned compatriots who had earlier refused to accept the newly introduced cartridge. Then they travelled to Delhi, where on May 11, 1857, they crowned the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as the Emperor of 'Hindustan'.

♦ *Spread of the revolt*

The uprising immediately spread from Delhi to other army centres in the North-Western Provinces and Awadh. It soon took the form of a civil rebellion with the support of the discontented rural population. The disheartened Governor General, Lord Canning, wrote on June 19 1857, that "Rohilkhand and the Doab from Delhi to Kanpur and Allahabad, the country is not only in rebellion against us, but is utterly lawless." The Bengal army was most severely affected by the mutiny. But the Madras and Bombay army regiments remained silent. While the Punjabi and Gurkha



soldiers actively assisted in suppressing the uprising. However, when considering the entire population, about half of the Indian sepoy employed by the East India Company had rebelled, and the Bengal regiment held the greatest number of Indian sepoys. The fact that there was a limited British military presence in Bengal led to the army's composition. This move turned out to have been a grave mistake for the British later. Furthermore, the sepoys in the Bengal army were constituted from their high-caste origin, as they were primarily recruited from Awadh.

♦ *Discontent among the Sepoys*

The sepoys had been living with a lot of grievances, and they had been disappointed for a while. Their wage level decreased, and they experienced discrimination in pension and promotion. Their religious views had recently conflicted with their new service circumstances. The new service regulations that eliminated their additional compensation for serving outside of their home regions were implemented in 1856. They believed that serving overseas was a matter of violating their caste rules. They faced retaliation and termination for refusing to serve in Afghanistan, Sind, or Burma. Due to the dissatisfaction with the working conditions, there was also a constant concern that the British had become intent on converting them to Christianity. Confusion over the cartridge for the enfield rifle cartridge, the presence of missionaries, and tales of combining flour of cow and pig bone dust all made for an interesting conspiracy scenario.

♦ *Discontent in Awadh*

The annexation of Awadh in 1856 had a particularly negative impact on their morale, as about seventy-five thousand soldiers from the Bengal army were recruited from Awadh. Dalhousie had already received a warning from Sir James Outram that "every agricultural family in Oudh, perhaps without exception, sends one of its members into the British army". These Sepoys were shaken in their allegiance when the British were shown to be untrustworthy by annexing Awadh. Furthermore, because the sepoys were peasants in uniform, they were concerned about the peasants' deteriorating condition in Awadh. The uprising was preceded by around 14,000 petitions from the sepoys expressing their troubles with the taxation system. The sepoys' open revolt against the British was not solely motivated by the "cartridge" they had to throw in their cannon.

A series of civilian unrest accompanied the mutiny, proving to be even more challenging. Colonial rule affected Indian



♦ *Civilian  
Insurgency*

society in diverse ways, leading to significant variation in the community's responses. Initially, areas and populations that benefited from colonial rule did not rise in the rebellion. Not only did Bengal and Punjab continue to exist peacefully, but the whole of South India did, too. On the other hand, there were two factions within the insurgent group: the peasantry on the one hand and the feudal elements and large landlords on the other. The grievances of different classes differed from one another. From region to region, grievances also differed in their nature.

♦ *Doctrine of Lapse  
and Annexation of  
Awadh*

Regarding the feudal components, their main complaint was about the annexations made by Lord Dalhousie. His 'Doctrine of Lapse' disregarded the adopted sons of the deceased princes' who were rightful heirs to take their kingdoms. The policy led to the annexation of the kingdoms, especially Satara (1848), Nagpur, Sambalpur, and Baghat (1850), Udaipur (1852), and Jhansi (1853). The British unnecessarily interfered in their customary inheritance system. As a result, a group of furious feudal lords had every reason to join the rebels. In February 1856, Awadh was ultimately annexed, and the ruler of Oudh was deported to Calcutta. The Nawab and his family were not the only members of the nobility connected to the royal court who were impacted by the annexation.

♦ *Leadership*

The overthrown princes played a crucial role in guiding the rebels in their respective areas. Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao II, emerged as the leader of Kanpur, while Begum Hazrat Mahal took charge in Lucknow. Khan Bahadur Khan led the rebellion in Rohilkhand, and Rani Lakshmibai became the head of the sepoys in Jhansi. Rani Lakshmibai had previously expressed her willingness to submit to British rule if her adopted son was recognised as the rightful heir to the throne. In other parts of central India, where there was no such dispossession, rulers remained loyal to the British, such as in Indore, Gwalior, Saugar, or parts of Rajasthan.

The taluqdars, or landed magnates, were other members of rural society who joined the rebellion. After Awadh was annexed, there was a settlement in 1856 that resulted in the dispossession of taluqdars. To eliminate all other ownership rights, a settlement was reached with the land's actual occupants. The main goal was to gain popularity among the farming community and eliminate the intermediaries between the peasants and the government. The taluqdars



◆ *Discontented Taluqdars*

in Awadh consequently lost roughly half of their estates. They were disarmed, and their forts were destroyed, and that led to a significant loss of status and power of the community. Accordingly, Awadh and the North Western Provinces, where a large number of taluqdars had been dispossessed, became centres of dissatisfaction among the landed aristocrats. Upon the commencement of the revolt, these taluqdars immediately occupied the villages they had just lost. They encountered no opposition from their former tenants. According to Thomas Metcalf, "The villagers were united against the British and glad to accept the claims of their lords since they were bound by kinship and feudal loyalty."

◆ *Peasant Grievances*

The peasants, who were also severely impacted by the government's high revenue demands, also joined the revolt. For instance, here in Awadh, there were areas of over-assessment, and in these areas, the losses suffered by the taluqdars led to a "talukdar-peasant complementarity" of interests. In the North-Western Provinces, where Mahalwari Settlement had been established with the village mulguzars, a similar situation also existed. The increasing demand for land tax also infuriated these village proprietors, who were meant to be the beneficiaries of the new land revenue system. The burden of over-assessment fell more heavily on rent-receiving landlords, who were severely affected by the burden of over-assessment. Increased public sales of landed rights also ultimately contributed to the uprising. Over 110,000 acres of land were sold off in the North-Western Provinces alone in 1853. High revenue demands in unstable agricultural areas eventually led to peasant debt and eventual alienation. When the revolt began, the impoverished peasants naturally turned their attention toward the banias and mahajans (money lenders), as well as their properties. According to S. B. Chaudhuri, "Thus the sale of land not merely uprooted the ordinary people from their small holdings but also destroyed the gentry of the country and both the orders being the victims of the operations of British civil law were united in the revolutionary epoch of 1857-58 in a common effort to recover what they had lost."

Given the complex nature of the circumstances, it's important to note that not all taluqdars were harmed by the British revenue system. In many places, the traditional landed castes shared proprietary rights, and new landed magnates frequently emerged from the lower castes. Nor did all peasants suffer in the same way. The burden of

♦ *Complexities of circumstances*

overestimation might be tolerated more readily by residents of irrigated and productive areas than by residents in underdeveloped regions. Even while certain peasant groups were struggling, they found it difficult to accept that their caste-related companions were prospering in the nearby areas by cash crop farming. The peasants in the backward areas appeared to be less resistant to the pressures of moneylenders or mahajans and were more likely to lose their land. However, it is unlikely that there was a direct link between debt and revolt. Stokes has expressed that there was an adverse relationship between the two. High revenue assessments on dry lands were not attractive to the outside banias or mahajans. They possessed only those lands where cash crops were cultivated.

♦ *Social homogeneity*

A key element in encouraging peasant uprisings was social homogeneity and collective strength. Community relations between the Sayyids, Rajputs, and Gujars had a significant role in determining how successful the peasant uprising was. It's possible that the only thing these rural societies had in common was a suspicion of British rule. They believed that the British threatened their religious beliefs. The circumstances were indirectly produced by the preceding social changes, directly influencing Christian missionaries. Unity between Muslims and Hindus was maintained throughout the uprising since both groups were equally impacted. A single primary factor cannot explain this massive wave of violent protests among the north Indian rural population. According to C.A. Bayly, "The Indian Rebellion of 1857 was not one movement; it was many."

### 1.2.4 Nature of the Revolt- Perspectives

♦ *A 'Sepoy' Mutiny?*

The nature of the 1857 revolt is another controversial topic, and discussions about it began immediately after it occurred. A few of the contemporaries believed that it was a Muslim conspiracy to bring back the Mughal Empire. However, there was not much available data to prove it. The more dominant contemporary view is that it was essentially a 'sepoy mutiny', with civil unrest, which was a secondary phenomenon and occurred as a result of the breakdown of law and order. Several historians, such as S.N. Sen, maintained the same colonial viewpoint in the narration of the history of the revolt of 1857. Sen claimed that "The movement began as a military mutiny". Similarly, R.C. Majumdar believes that "what began as a mutiny and ended in certain areas in an outbreak of civil population," which was occasionally organised by selfish local leaders and other times merely "mob violence"



brought on by the collapse of the state machinery.

♦ *National Revolt?*

However, from the beginning of the revolt, there were opposing viewpoints from all political forces. Benjamin Disraeli questioned in the House of Commons on July 27, 1857, "Is it a military mutiny, or is it a national revolt?" Karl Marx expressed similar concerns in the summer of 1857 in the pages of the New York Daily Tribune, writing that "what he (John Bull) considers a military mutiny is in truth a national revolt." In 1909, V.D. Savarkar wrote in his article that the revolt of the 1857 uprising was an "Indian War of Independence" and characterised it as a fight for "*su/adharma* and *swaraj*". While Sen and Majumdar both vehemently refuted this assertion, it gained significant scholarly backing in 1959 from S.B. Chaudhuri, who viewed the uprising as "the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge a foreign power."

♦ *Not a National Movement*

Since then, there has been continued debate, with the opinion progressively building that the 1857 revolt was not a nationalist movement in the modern sense of the word. In 1965, Thomas Metcalf wrote: "There is a widespread agreement that it was something more than a sepoy mutiny, but something less than a national revolt". It was not "national" in the sense that the people who participated in the uprising were restricted to Upper India, while the areas and communities that benefited from the British rule continued to stay loyal. Important groups of collaborators were also present. According to Judith Brown, "The middle classes in Bengali society remained loyal as they had material interests in the new order, and often a deep, ideological commitment to new ideas". The rulers of Punjab disliked the Indian soldiers, and they feared the thought of the resurrection of the Mughal Empire.

♦ *Not a Conspiracy*

However, C.A. Bayly contended that the reasons for the rebellion varied and were not always related to a particular grievance against the British. He says that they frequently engaged in conflict with one another, which "disunity among Indians played into British hands." Since confusing messages were being sent from village to village before the revolt, there was neither a planned strategy nor a conspiracy. According to Metcalf, "In their vision of the future, the rebel leaders were hopelessly at odds". Some of them owed allegiance to the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah, while others to various regional princesses. "United in defeat, the rebel leaders would have fallen at each other's throats in victory".

◆ *Increased interconnectedness*

It is difficult to deny that the rebels of 1857 did not believe in the existence of an 'Indian nation' in the contemporary sense. Well-defined territorial boundaries limited the peasant protests and were primarily local. However, unlike earlier peasant uprisings, there was increased interconnectedness across regions at this time. The rebels were receptive to influences from areas outside their districts. Rebels from various sections of north and central India communicated and coordinated with one another. Rumours circulated, binding the rebels in an invisible network. United in their hatred of the British and the disruptions caused by colonial rule, they directed their attacks at anything representing the Company's authority. They believed their religion and caste were under threat. Rebels everywhere, such as the sepoys of Jhansi, fought to defend their "*deen* (faith) and *dharam* (religion)" and to restore the moral order they felt had been corrupted by foreign invasion. According to Gautam Bhadra, a South-Asian historian, "It was the perception and day-to-day experience of the authority of the alien state in his immediate surroundings that determined the rebel's action". Despite not knowing one another and being divided by disparate backgrounds, they confronted the same enemy during the same historical period. According to Ranajit Guha, "they took up weapons in order to reclaim what they felt to be their ancestral lands."

As Rajat Ray, a South Asian historian, has claimed, their goal was to liberate "Hindustan" from foreign rule. During the uprising, there was a notable degree of religious harmony since everyone accepted that Hindustan belonged to both Muslims and Hindus. The 1857 rebels wanted to return to the old, familiar order, but it did not mean to go back to the age of the centralised Mughal state of the seventeenth century. Even though they all recognised the Mughal Emperor as their leader, they sought to bring back the decentralised political system that existed in India during the eighteenth century, when the provincial rulers operated with a great deal of autonomy.

◆ *Religious harmony*

The rebels agreed that Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor, and Delhi, the seat of the Mughals, served as symbols of that old world. In his book, C.A. Bayly identified "a set of patriotic revolts" in the 1857 rebellion. What the insurgents were looking for, he argues, "was the restoration of the Indo-Mughal period within the broader constellation of Mughal legitimacy, animated by mutual respect and a healthy balance between lands and people". As the uprising gained





◆ *'Patriotic' Revolt*

popularity, there was no blind acceptance of British rule, not even among the suspected collaborators. Thus, during 1857 and 1858, across India's many population divisions, dissatisfaction and opposition against foreign rule, if not necessarily an open urge for freedom, were expressed. The historical interpretation of the revolt of 1857 has shifted significantly in favour of the opposite direction in recent times.

◆ *'Elitist' Movement*

The question of whether the revolt was an elitist movement is crucial for understanding its nature. Some historians, such as Judith Brown, believed that the feudal elements made most of the decisions during the uprising and that the lack of a strong pro-British faction greatly influenced the course of the revolt. Eric Stokes concluded that the rural revolt of 1857 was essentially elitist in character. However, this viewpoint often overlooks the role played by the masses. In many instances, feudal lords were compelled by the rebels to assume leadership roles despite their reluctance. The rebel sepoys surprised Bahadur Shah Zafar, who accepted their leadership only with great hesitation. Tantia Tope, a close associate of Nana Sahib, later confessed that Nana Sahib was captured by rebel sepoys and threatened with severe consequences, leaving him with no option but to join the rebels. Furthermore, the Rani of Jhansi was genuinely threatened with death if she did not support the sepoys.

◆ *Participation of Taluqdars*

In many regions, peasants followed Taluqdars and accepted them as their leaders. The taluqdars were pushed to join the uprising by the peasants and artisans in several areas. The masses insisted on continuing the uprising even after the taluqdars had made peace with the British. As revealed by Rudrangshu Mukherjee, taluqdar participation in Awadh was never universal because some stayed faithful, some turned traitors, some took a moderate position, and some crouched down when they saw the British troops advancing near.

◆ *Peasant Mobilisation*

Above all, the primary inspiration originated from the sepoys, the uniformed peasants, who had discarded their uniforms to rejoin the peasants. The uprising in army barracks immediately extended to nearby villages throughout central and northern India, and the sepoys were also linked to the peasant communities. Almost always, conferences, panchayat meetings, or open assemblies of rebels proceeded for rebellion. According to Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, "Ultimately, the chapatis served throughout villages in a

geometrical progression that conveyed different meanings to different people. It is very hard to ignore the indications of the peasant mobilisation during the 1857–1858 uprisings”.

♦ *Serious repercussions*

The revolt of 1857 was crushed by the overwhelming British force. In Calcutta, Lord Canning assembled British troops and dispatched them to reclaim Delhi from the rebels. Delhi was eventually retaken on September 20, 1857, and Bahadur Shah Zafar was imprisoned and later deported. The rebels gradually seized Banaras, Allahabad, and Kanpur, fiercely defending every inch of territory, while the British imposed a reign of terror throughout the nation. The balance of power shifted decisively against the insurgents in October with the arrival of additional British troops in Calcutta. Between the spring of 1858 and the beginning of 1859, British forces captured Gwalior, Doab, Lucknow, and the remaining territories of Awadh, Rohilkhand, and central India.

♦ *Causes for the defeat of the revolt*

Modern colonial historians explained the real causes of the defeat of the rural rebels and sepoys. It includes the ‘British strength’, ‘superior national character’, ‘superior leadership abilities’, and ‘successful military tactics’. In contrast, the rebels of the insurgency lack unity, discipline, and order. A similar view was also held by a few of the early Indian historians. Modern historians counter that the sepoys suffered from a terrible lack of money, while the British had an infinite amount of soldiers and resources to recapture their empire. The rebels lacked even basic military training and were armed with only primitive weapons. The British army possessed highly advanced weapons and controlled nearly the whole of India. Additionally, they were supported by a centralised bureaucracy and had access to an effective communication system. As noted by Stokes, the rebel sepoys showed an extraordinary “centripetal impulse to congregate at Delhi,” which restricted the spread of the rebellion to further areas. Thus, the rebellion entered its final stages when, by March 1858, Delhi and Lucknow fell. The highly localised pattern of the uprisings aided the British in addressing each one individually. The rebellion was completely ended by the beginning of 1859.

The uprising of 1857 marked a significant turning point in Indian history. It put an end to the rule of the English East India Company. In advance of the country’s complete restoration of peace, the British Parliament passed an Act for the ‘Better Government of India’ on August 2, 1858, which established Queen Victoria as the sovereign of British India and directed

◆ *Act for the Better Government of India*

the appointment of a Secretary of State for India who would serve in the cabinet. The act was supposed to take effect on November 1, 1858, when the Queen issued a proclamation promising religious tolerance and recommending the administration of Indians in harmony with their centuries-old traditions and customs.

◆ *Consequences of Constitutional Amendment*

Bernard Cohn provides an overview of the consequences of this constitutional amendment for the British in India by saying that “the British, who had begun their rule as ‘outsiders,’ became ‘insiders’ by establishing in their monarch the sovereignty of India. The proclamation established a well-organised imperial system in India that arranged the relationships between the monarch and her delegates in India and the Princes and their Indian subjects. In addition, there were other significant changes that were brought about by nearly a year of violent racial conflict. The sepoys were accused of a major violation of the breach of trust, both in India and outside; the British viewed all Indians with suspicion.

◆ *Impact of the revolt*

The revolt had a lasting impact on the relationship between the British and Indians in the subsequent centuries that followed. From this point onwards, racial segregation strengthened because Indians were seen as both different and inferior to other races. More importantly, it seems that the early reformist attitude of Victorian liberalism suddenly vanished with the belief that Indians could not be changed. Thomas Metcalf called this new attitude the “conservative brand of liberalism,” and it was based on the “complete non-interference in the traditional structure of Indian society with the solid support of the conservative and aristocratic classes.” Obviously, this conservative response strengthened the empire’s authoritarian tendencies and suppressed the educated Indians’ desire to share power. The discontent of the educated middle class led to the emergence of modern nationalism in India towards the end of the nineteenth century, which weakened the empire.

## Summarised Overview

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the East India Company introduced revenue reforms that significantly impacted rural Indian life. This led to a new social order in Indian society, with numerous uprisings instigated by disgruntled zamindars, Mughal officials, or local leaders. Two significant uprisings occurred in the south: the Pazhassi Raja rebellion and the uprising spearheaded by Travancore's Prime Minister, Velu Thampi.

The Sanyasi-Fakirs and military forces of the East India Company fought over a vast region of Bengal and Bihar. A new religious movement was started by Karim Shah and his successor Tipu Shah among Hinduised Hadis, Hajangs, and Garos in Sherpur Pargana (East Bengal). The Faraizi movement was born under the leadership of Haji Shariatullah in Eastern Bengal.

In 1819, the Bhil movement broke out, which the British army suppressed. In 1829, the Kolis of the Ahmednagar area also rebelled against the British. However, a sizable force quickly overcame them. The Kol rebellion took place in the Bihar and Orissa districts of Singhbhum and Chota Nagpur in 1831-1832.

Armed uprisings occurred in various regions of central and northern India in 1857, with the Meerut Sepoys ultimately leading an uprising on May 10, 1857. Historians have debated the nature of the revolt, with some arguing it began as a 'military mutiny' and others claiming it was essentially 'elitist' in character.

The East India Company's rule came to an end with the revolt of 1857, and the Indian empire was pacified in 1858 by a Parliamentary Act, with the British Crown taking control.

## Assignments

1. Analyse the rise of anti-British sentiments in India.
2. Explain how India was exploited economically by the British.
3. Discuss the examples of the British's anti-Indian attitude.
4. Analyse the role of peasants in the revolt of 1857.
5. Discuss the historiographical debate on the nature of the 1857 revolt.



## Suggested Reading

1. Desai, A.R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Books, 1948.
2. Majumdar, R.C., *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. I, K.L.M. Pvt Limited, Calcutta, 1962.
3. Sarkar, Sumit., *Modern India 1885-1947*, Pearson, Delhi, 2014.
4. Seal, Anil., *Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.

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1. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar., *From Plassey to Partition*, Orient Longman, 2004.
2. Chandra, Bipan., *Modern India*, National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1903.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU





## Colonial Modernity and its Impact

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ explore how the encounter with colonial powers shaped the socio-political sphere of the Indian subcontinent.
- ◆ unravel the multifaceted aspects of colonial modernity and its impact on Indian society
- ◆ discuss the emergence of new ideologies and the role of the public sphere in colonial India
- ◆ assess the limitations of social and religious reform movements in the nineteenth century

### Background

During the nineteenth century, India witnessed significant transformations under British colonial rule. Initially, the English East India Company adopted a policy of nonintervention, respecting traditional Indian culture and existing systems. This approach, known as Orientalism, involved studying Indian culture through Sanskrit and Persian scriptures to facilitate effective governance. However, a shift towards cautious intervention in Indian social institutions emerged, influenced by Evangelicalism, Utilitarianism, and free trade ideologies from Britain. Despite continued support for Oriental learning institutions, the focus gradually shifted towards English education. Meanwhile, Raja Rammohun Roy and other reformers advocated modernisation through English education and Western sciences. Reform movements aimed to address social inequalities and advocate for women's rights, though they were often limited by their narrow social base and reliance on colonial support. Women's education, driven by British rulers, Indian reformers, and educated women, progressed slowly and often reinforced traditional domestic roles.

As we noted, Colonialism led to social upheaval and reconfigured the power structure. The emergence of a public sphere in India facilitated the dissemination of knowledge, the proliferation of print culture, and the formation of public discourses. This public sphere played a major role in shaping political consciousness, fostering intellectual exchange, and galvanising anti-colonial movements. In this Unit, let us examine the nuances of colonial modernity, highlighting both its aspirations and inherent limitations and how these reforms influenced Indian society.



## Keywords

Orientalism, Colonial Modernity, Social Change, Public sphere, Colonialism, English Education, Reform movements

## Discussion

### 1.3.1 Colonial Modernity and its Ideology

#### ◆ *Influence of Colonial Ideology on Indian Society*

During the nineteenth century, British colonial ideology and culture had a crucial impact on Indian society. Indigenous elites, including Hindu, Muslim, and other communities, began modernisation efforts within their religions under the influence of colonial teachings. This socio-religious reform aimed to eradicate non-modern and syncretic religious practices from everyday life. The shift from pre-colonial to colonial epistemology in religious reform had profound consequences for India's future. Colonial historiography and ideology often created divides, categorising practices as either mainstream or marginal, majority or minority, and drawing a clear line between what was considered modern and what was traditional. As a result, abandoning traditional and syncretic practices became a key part of the modernisation efforts, heavily influenced by colonial policies.

#### ◆ *Long-term Impact*

Colonial administrative systems, like the Cornwallis and Munro systems, have had long-term effects on post-colonial South Asian societies. Similarly, the education system implemented by Macaulay continues to influence post-colonial India. By framing India as backward, colonial modernity transformed the intellectual environment and fuelled public anxiety. Both British and indigenous colonial elites sought to 'improve' India, but their efforts often overlooked and marginalised the subaltern classes.

#### ◆ *Creation of colonial knowledge*

Colonial ideology, comprising various strands rooted in Orientalism, Liberal-Whiggishness, and modern historiography, shaped the colonial discourse in India. Despite their differences, these strands converged to create a colonial knowledge of India's past, influencing both colonial administrative matters and attempts of Indian elites to consolidate religious identities and rediscover national or local histories. The colonial attempts to enumerate Indian communities through processes like the census provided an awakening among these communities while simultaneously impacting the self-perceptions of educated Indian elites.



◆ *Bernard Cohn*

Bernard Cohn and scholars from the University of Chicago, including Nicholas Dirks and Arjun Appadurai, pioneered anthropological studies focused on colonial knowledge in India. Cohn's work highlighted how colonial knowledge not only sought to understand India but also shaped and transformed Indian society itself. This knowledge, deeply embedded in the colonial project, justified Britain's civilising mission in India. Cohn's research, along with others, demonstrated how colonial censuses, for example, not only collected information but also constructed a new vision of India under colonial rule, distinct from its pre-colonial reality.

◆ *Imposition of Colonial Knowledge*

As mentioned above, the colonial 'discovery of India' and the imposition of colonial knowledge were essential to both the cultural and economic projects of colonialism. This process involved perceiving, understanding, classifying, and ordering society according to colonial frameworks. It began with the conquests of the English East India Company in the mid-eighteenth century, particularly through the Battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1764). In essence, shifting from mercantilist exploitation to systematic governance aimed at addressing the financial challenges of the Company and facilitating wealth transfer to Britain.

◆ *Key questions*

The emergence of organised exploitation in India prompted English debates on various crucial questions: How could a steady revenue flow into the treasury be ensured? What educational system would best suit Indians? How should the natives be understood and governed? What was the significance of India's social diversity, customs, and languages? According to some scholars, these inquiries reflected the complexities of British identity formation amidst historical upheavals like the loss of America, the acquisition and reshaping of India, and the events surrounding the French Revolution.

◆ *Influential schools of thought*

While there were diverse perspectives on India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Orientalism and liberal whiggishness emerged as dominant influences on British policy and the conceptualisation of Indian history. The Evangelical view also gained importance in the early nineteenth century, often aligning with Whiggishness. These ideologies often converged when addressing issues of backwardness in India.

Contrary to assumptions, early debates on India's future did not exclude Indian opinion. From the era of Warren Hastings, British authorities sought native perspectives on various matters, including legal interpretations and language

♦ *Native-Colonial Collaboration*

policies. These collaborative efforts between sections of the Indian elites and the British influenced governance. This collaboration positioned the intermediary elite as representatives of the broader Indian population, but they were strategically placed between the British rulers and marginalised classes in India. Hence, scholars like Eugene Irschick view orientalism as a 'collaborative intellectual exercise' involving colonial officials, Indian commentators, and native informants. However, the main aim was largely to meet the needs of the colonial state. It also shows the power dynamics within colonial knowledge production. The collaboration between native and colonial elites has led to the perception that colonialism in India was a hybrid enterprise influenced by the interaction of multiple cultures. However, this hybridity often disadvantaged the Indian subaltern classes, whose labour and resources supported both the colonial regime and the Indian elite.

Now, to learn more about colonial modernity, let us take a close look at the trends in administration and the role of intellectual discourses during the colonial period.

### 1.3.1.1 Administration

♦ *Ideologies*

One can trace the beginning of the British attempt to civilise the backward section of society worldwide to the sixteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, they started to accept the idea of building an empire based on military power, social hierarchy, and racial superiority. During this time, the British developed a strong sense of patriotism, which was closely linked to their control over foreign lands. In the nineteenth century, as the British sought to legitimise their imperial ambitions, they began to see themselves as modern and civilised compared to the people of the East, whom they called 'Orientals.' Various intellectual and political movements influenced the ideas that shaped British rule in India. However, the way these ideas were implemented sometimes changed due to pressure from the people they ruled or because of problems in the colonies. While the British approach evolved, the core principles of their empire remained the same. When the East India Company first came to India, they acted like a local ruler. They recognised the authority of the Mughal emperor and administered justice according to Hindu and Muslim laws. Robert Clive, a key figure in British India, proposed a system called 'dual government.' Under this system, the East India Company managed civil and financial affairs, while local officials





handled criminal justice.

♦ *Perceptions of Indian Culture and Tradition*

According to Western perceptions, India had a glorious past but experienced a decline. Scholars like Sir William Jones studied Indian languages to revive India's forgotten culture and legal traditions. To understand Indian languages and traditions, orientalist scholars founded institutions like the Calcutta Madrasa in 1781, the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 and the Sanskrit College in 1794. This definition of Indian tradition, in a way, favoured certain narratives and served the interests of the colonial state.

♦ *Colonial production of knowledge*

The early stages of Orientalism were evident in the company policies under Warren Hastings. The idea central to this principle was that the conquered people should be governed according to their own laws. This legitimised the British rule in the Indian context. This further led to the British gathering knowledge about Indian society, including their customs and laws, to administer to Indian subjects. The colonial production of knowledge culminated in the establishment of Fort William College at Calcutta in 1800. It was to train civil servants in Indian languages and traditions, thereby perpetuating the Orientalist discourse. However, scholars such as Thomas Trautmann argue that Orientalism had a broader political objective. It sought to create a narrative of kinship between the British and Indians dating back to classical times, aiming to bind Indians to colonial rule through rhetoric of affection morally. The British underlined the importance of accumulating knowledge for the state, asserting that it fostered goodwill among subjects and lessened the burdens of subjugation. Despite its initial respect for ancient Indian traditions, Orientalist discourse eventually produced knowledge about the subject of society that led to its rejection as a governance policy. Scholars began to highlight India's traditional glory attributed to the Aryans, who were seen as distant kin of Europeans, while also emphasising the subsequent degeneration of Aryan civilisation. This narrative justified authoritarian rule as necessary to rescue India and elevate it to a state of progress comparable to Europe.

Lord Cornwallis diverged from Warren Hastings' policies and supported greater Anglicisation of the administration and the imposition of Whig principles from British governance. Supported by Lord Wellesley, these reforms aimed to limit government interference, abandon the despotic nature of the governance and establish a separation

♦ *Paternalistic attitude of the British*

of powers between the judiciary and executive. The state's role was redefined to focus solely on protecting individual rights and private property. This reflected a contempt for 'Oriental despotism that purportedly plagued Indian society. It was an implicit justification for the paternalistic nature of British rule. To facilitate trade and ensure revenue collection, the Company attempted to diminish the role and influence of rajas and zamindars and the Mughal state. They characterised that natives were not accustomed to freedom and needed emancipation from corrupt feudal lords. William Jones epitomised this paternalistic attitude, simultaneously admiring India's glorious past while upholding authoritarian rule.

♦ *Trends in Administration*

Eric Stokes identifies two distinct trends in Indian administration under the English East India Company: the Cornwallis system and the Ryotwari Settlement. The Cornwallis system, centred in Bengal, was epitomised by the introduction of the Permanent Settlement. Lord Cornwallis aimed to modernise the establishment of the rule of law and private property rights. However, Munro and his followers, such as Mountstuart Elphinstone and Charles Metcalfe, believed that the Cornwallis system neglected Indian tradition. While they endorsed the rule of law and separation of powers, they advocated for changes that fit to the Indian context by preserving elements of personal government. They also emphasised the protective role of the Company's government. Munro implemented the Ryotwari Settlement to preserve India's village communities, primarily aiming to expand the Company's state in the south by enhancing its revenue base. This system involved the direct collection of land taxes from peasants by British officers. Burton Stein argues that he drew inspiration from the 'military fiscalism' of Tipu Sultan's Mysore. Munro advocated for indirect rule of certain regions, believing that the traditional Indian governance system could function effectively under the British authorities. This approach was a part of authoritative paternalism and rejected direct political participation by Indians.

Paternalism was one of the major ideologies of the early British empire in India. This enabled them to coexist with the power of the local elites, such as zamindars in Bengal. Both the Cornwallis and Munro systems tried to protect private property, which reinforced the authority of the local elites. The decline of Awadh taluqdars, for instance, culminated in the revolt of 1857 and led to their restoration



♦ *Shifts in administration*

to their positions of authority. Cornwallis's administration in newly conquered territories was initially considered to be conservative. It was driven by the need to raise revenue to sustain investments and to maintain governance. However, significant shifts began to occur with further conquests and the pacification of regions.

♦ *Role of intellectual currents*

Around 1800, during the onset of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, there was a heightened need to develop and integrate Indian markets for manufactured goods and secure a stable supply of raw materials. This necessitated a more efficient administration and closer economic ties between the colony and the mother country. Moreover, intellectual currents in Britain, advocating for improvement and reform, exerted pressure for change both at the domestic level and in India. Also, the free trade lobby in England sought to abolish the Company's monopoly over Indian trade. Meanwhile, Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism influenced the Company's administration in India. Both criticised the conquest of India as a sin or crime but pushed for reform to ensure good governance aligned with progressive ideals. This intellectual shift laid the groundwork for England's belief in maintaining a permanent presence in India in a reformed and benevolent manner.

### 1.3.1.2 Intellectual Currents

♦ *Evangelicalism and British Mission in India*

Evangelicalism emerged as a movement aimed at changing what it saw as the 'barbaric' aspects of Indian society. This movement supported the idea that British rule should be permanent and that Britain had a mission to transform India. In India, Evangelicalism spread mainly through missionaries. Charles Grant, a prominent supporter of this movement, believed that the main issue in India was its religious beliefs, which he thought kept people ignorant. He argued that British rule could solve this problem by spreading Christian teachings, portraying British rule as a noble mission to enlighten India. Grant's ideas gained support in the British Parliament, especially through the efforts of William Wilberforce. This eventually led to the Charter Act of 1813, which allowed Christian missionaries to enter India and spread their message freely.

Simultaneously, free-trade merchants promoted ideas of improvement and change. It envisioned India as a lucrative market for British goods and a supplier of raw materials if the Company shifted focus from trade to governance. They believed that under good governance, Indian peasants could

◆ *Evangelist and free trade ideologies*

experience material improvement and become consumers of British products. Fundamentally, there was little difference between the positions of Evangelists and free-trade merchants regarding the policy of assimilation and Anglicisation. Charles Grant, the Evangelist, played a key role in the passage of the Charter Act of 1833, which stripped the Company of its monopoly rights over Indian trade.

◆ *Liberalism and Utilitarianism*

During the era of British liberalism, Thomas Macaulay emphasised the civilising mission of British administrators in India. Rather than mere conquest, Macaulay argued for active governance to emancipate India. C.E. Trevelyan echoed a similar sentiment. According to him, India was a testament to British benevolence. Utilitarianism, with its authoritarian tendencies, gained prominence during this period. Jeremy Bentham advocated for achieving the greatest happiness of the society through making good laws and having an efficient administration. For the social improvement, the rule of law was deemed essential. James Mill, who was a Utilitarian, influenced India's policies. His works, including 'The History of British India' published in 1817, challenged myths about India's economic and cultural wealth perpetuated by Sir William Jones and others. Mill argued for the necessity of wise governance and effective legislation for India. This led to the appointment of a Law Commission under Lord Macaulay in 1833, which formulated the Indian Penal Code in 1835 based on Benthamite principles.

◆ *The Orientalist-Anglicist debate*

However, Utilitarians and liberals held different views, particularly regarding Anglicisation. It was evident in the Orientalist-Anglicist debate over the nature of education in India during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1835, Lord Macaulay, a liberal, advocated for English education through his Education Minute. Meanwhile, Utilitarians like Mill favoured vernacular education, which was more aligned with Indian needs. This debate reflected the dilemmas in imperial attitudes towards India.

◆ *Persistence of dilemmas*

Lord Bentinck was an active part of this debate. He abolished practices like *sati* and child infanticide while maintaining faith in Indian traditions. His approach was based on scriptural logic, and he cited ancient Hindu texts to justify his position on abolition. Despite his Utilitarian approach, Bentinck reflected the ongoing tensions between British reformist ideologies and respect for Indian traditions. These dilemmas prevailed during the mid-nineteenth century, reflected in the case of the Indian Penal Code, drafted in 1835,



becoming law until 1860. It highlighted the complexities and contradictions in British colonial governance and attitudes towards India.

◆ *Post-1857 changes*

After the 1857 revolt in India, Victorian liberalism emphasised paternalism as the dominant ideology of the Raj. The traumatic events of the revolt made many in England and India believe that attempts at reform were futile and even dangerous. They doubted the capacity of Indians to emulate Englishmen. Despite this, elements of reform persisted. It was evidenced in the Crown Proclamation of 1858 and legislative acts like the Indian Councils Act of 1861 and the Local Self-government Act of 1882, which partially shared power with Indians. Over time, admiration for Indian culture diminished, and it was replaced by a belief in the superiority of the British.

◆ *Shift towards authoritarian liberalism*

James Fitzjames Stephen, who succeeded Macaulay as the law member in the viceroy's council, showed this shift towards a more authoritarian form of liberalism. He stressed India's differences and viewed Indian society as inferior. During this time, Victorian England, influenced by racial sciences, reinforced these ideas. It gave primary importance to the physical features of languages as indicators of racial identity and rejected the notion of an ancient Indian civilisation. Instead, it promoted the theory that 'white' Aryans had invaded and established Vedic civilisation by confronting 'dark-skinned' Indian natives. This new Orientalist perspective portrayed Indian society as 'backward' and 'caste-ridden', justifying harsh colonial rule. Reforms during this period were often responses to political pressures from Indians rather than being motivated by a genuine desire for equality or inclusion.

◆ *Establishment of Imperial Authority*

The racial superiority shown by the rulers was not a new phenomenon emerging in the mid-nineteenth century. During the late eighteenth century, Cornwallis instigated a policy of physical separation between the British and the Indians. British soldiers were prohibited from engaging in relationships with Indian women and confined to army cantonments. Company civil servants were encouraged to marry British women to maintain regard and reverence from the natives. During the first half of the nineteenth century, alongside racial arrogance, there was also a sense of liberal optimism expressed by Lord Macaulay. He urged Indians to resemble Europeans in taste and intellect. However, the events of 1857 were a huge blow to this. Later, in the



♦ *Colonial  
Modernity and  
Orientalism*

Imperial Assemblage of 1877, Queen Victoria was declared Empress of India, solidified British authority over India, and established a hierarchical social order with the viceroy at its centre. The Ilbert Bill controversy in 1883, intended to grant Indian judges jurisdiction over Europeans, reflected the authoritarian trends and racial arrogance of the colonisers. This, in turn, set the stage for the confrontation with Indian nationalism in the twentieth century.

### 1.3.1.3 Orientalism

To understand colonial modernity, we should examine the concept of Orientalism and its colonial roots. Orientalism, as Edward Said delineated, refers to the Western portrayal and construction of the East, often perpetuating stereotypes and power imbalances. This Western academic tradition has significantly influenced the study of colonial history and shaped the perspectives of colonisers and the colonised. This lens of Orientalism profoundly influenced colonial encounters and developed perceptions of the colonised societies, including India. It has opened new avenues for understanding different aspects of colonialism in India by shedding light on previously overlooked aspects of history.

♦ *Development  
of Indology*

Orientalism, as a method of perceiving and theorising the East, had its roots in Europe since the medieval period. It arrived in India as an officially patronised school of thought in the late eighteenth century. European Orientalists, since medieval times, had shown a special interest in the epistemology of Eastern cultures, which were believed to extend from Turkey to Japan. Early Orientalists often viewed the Orient as a culture different from but worthy of appreciation by Europeans. In Germany, the academic field of Indology emerged from an intense interest in the Orient among intellectuals who reacted against the industrial materialism of the West. Indology glorified ancient spiritual 'Vedic Hindu India' and argued for the dissimilarity between 'Vedic Hindus' and ancient Europeans, suggesting that India could help the West transcend modernity. At the same time, the West could aid India materially. However, this required India to rediscover its ancient glory using tools central to modern historiography.

Orientalism, as a method of perceiving and theorising the Orient, underwent a significant transformation during the early nineteenth century. Its roots can be traced back to the European views of non-Europeans during the sixteenth century, influenced by the Spanish and Portuguese



◆ *Transformation of Orientalism*

colonial empires and the socio-religious perspectives of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-Reformation. The age of geographical discoveries and the cultural transformation of Europe leading up to the Enlightenment further influenced European perspectives on the Orient.

◆ *Edward Said on Orientalism*

Edward Said's seminal work, published in 1978, comprehensively deconstructed Orientalism. Said provided a foundational framework for understanding the Western construction of the East. Said argued that Europe's self-image was intricately linked to its portrayal of the Orient as 'backward', 'exotic', and 'irrational'. He dissected major literary texts and political documents to reveal how the Orient was constructed as a peculiar European invention. Said emphasised that Orientalism was not merely a collection of lies or myths but a comprehensive body of theory and practice that shaped academic, cultural, and political discourses. His work catalysed critical examinations of Western knowledge production, particularly colonial knowledge, and its impact on global power dynamics.

◆ *Deconstruction by Edward Said*

Drawing on Gramscian concepts of hegemony and Foucault's critique of modernity, Said argued that Orientalism was a discourse of imperialism and colonialism produced by modern Western capitalism to exercise total power over the Orient. Said viewed Orientalism as inherently biased against African and Asian cultures, perpetuating Eurocentric dominance over knowledge, politics, culture, and state authority.

◆ *Critiques and Counter Arguments*

While Said's analysis raised fundamental questions about Eurocentrism and imperialism, critics argue that not all European descriptions of the Orient can be reduced to imperialist Eurocentrism. They point to pre-modern colonial European travellers and German Orientalist scholars whose works predated modern colonialism. Critics and supporters alike grapple with the complexities of Said's analysis. Some warn against overstating Said's claims, while others highlight the unintended consequences of his work, such as providing an intellectual basis for 'Islamism' or reinforcing Indian nationalist narratives of blaming British colonialism for all modern social problems. Despite the debates, Said's critique of Orientalism remains central to postmodern examinations of colonial and postcolonial modernity.

Said's work is significant as it emphasises the transformation of some European countries, especially Britain and France, into modern colonising powers during the early nineteenth

◆ *Civilisational Departure*

century. It marks a civilisational departure where the Occidental was positioned superior to the Oriental. However, one may consider the prehistory of modern colonial Orientalism, which includes the knowledge generated by early modern colonisers like the Spaniards, Portuguese, and Dutch, who practised slavery and similar forms of servitude during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

◆ *Transition*

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, India witnessed a transition from a prehistory of Orientalism to historicised Orientalism. The disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the rise of regional polities in India facilitated the emergence of the English East India Company as the paramount power in India. Despite their limited literacy rate and the schism between written and oral knowledge traditions, the British realised the necessity of forming alliances with traditional intellectual and propertied elites in India to rule effectively. Aligning with traditional ideologies served as a tool for intellectual subjugation, as dominant ideology provided a sense of historical continuity that justified British rule based on textual sanctions enjoyed by India's ruling orders.

◆ *Dissemination of knowledge*

◆ *Challenges from Subaltern movements*

During the nineteenth century, the classification and codification of Indians into groups and the validation of their texts acquired scientific validity and social acceptance. The colonial era's increased dissemination of prints, literacy rates, and advancements in communication technology further reinforced the plausibility of orthodoxy's claims. Thus, traditional elites within colonised societies utilised colonial modernity's institutions to strengthen their control over their communities and shape colonial narratives. However, this hegemony was eventually challenged by various subaltern movements, including those initiated by Dalit intellectual activists like Jyotiba Phule and Bhimrao Ambedkar, who used colonial modernity to challenge the caste orthodoxy of the upper castes.

◆ *British efforts*

Under the leadership of Warren Hastings, early British administrators and scholars propagated the belief that India should be governed in accordance with ancient Hindu scriptures for Hindus and medieval scriptures with Quranic sanction for Muslims. This search for equivalent texts among Hindus led to the Brahmanical texts on law, culture, history, and customs. Consequently, a new discourse emerged, leading to the rediscovery of ancient India through the codification of its Sanskrit Vedic texts by British scholars with the assistance of Brahmin scholars. Sanskrit became India's language of classical learning, influencing an Orientalist



understanding of India's past, present, and potential future, guided by colonial masters and their upper-caste Indian collaborators.

◆ *Cultural similarities*

In early studies of Indian history, Orientalism first identified cultural similarities between ancient Europe and ancient India through comparative philology. However, by the nineteenth century, Indology began to frame the relationship between the West and India as a binary opposition between material and spiritual realms. According to this view, the West would gain spiritual insights from India, while India would benefit from Western material and technological advancements. Orientalism also pushed India's historical timeline back to a distant, glorious past, dividing Indian history into religious periods. It promoted the idea that Indian civilisation was fundamentally Aryan and Hindu, depicting non-Aryan communities and traditions as either foreign influences or internal disruptions. This perspective was embraced by revivalist groups like the Arya Samaj, which called for a return to the values of the Vedic Age.

◆ *Tools of dominance*

These ideas were first articulated in the late eighteenth century, gained momentum during the nineteenth century, and became the ideological foundation of nationalism and communalism in India. They found popularity among the urban English-educated Indian middle class, partly due to the discourse propagated by the colonial education system. This education system aimed to create a class of Indians who were politically subordinate and culturally inferior to the English in India. It reinforced the perception of India's historical backwardness. This notion, although a product of British colonialism, justified British rule as historically progressive. As a consequence, the native elite internalised a sense of racial, cultural, and historical inferiority, remaining dependent on and subordinate to the British for guidance. The study of Indian history became intertwined with the project of colonialism, serving to rationalise and perpetuate colonial dominance.

◆ *Colonial education and historiography's influence*

Colonial education and historiography played a crucial role in making the narrative of Indian history during British rule. This narrative often depicted a 'dark age' during the Mughal period, contrasting it with the idea of progress under 'enlightened' British rule. It positioned Britain and the West more broadly as the critical reference point for India's future development.

Even as opposition to British rule grew in the late nineteenth century, core tenets of colonial historiography

◆ *Continued influence on Indian nationalism*

persisted among middle-class Indians. The glorification of ancient India and the Mughal Empire, alongside communal interpretations of medieval conflicts, demonstrates this influence. Above all, revivalist movements like the Arya Samaj, while advocating for Vedic ideals, still integrated Western learning into their educational institutions, reflecting the lasting impact of colonial modernity.

◆ *Convergence of ideas*

By the end of the nineteenth century, the blending of Orientalism, Indology, and British liberalism created a framework that influenced how colonial subjects resisted the cultural inferiority imposed by British rule. Reformers like Rammohun Roy, along with others after the Revolt of 1857, understood the need to integrate Western education with Indian cultural traditions to develop a modernity that was relevant to Indian conditions. Institutions such as Aligarh Muslim University are an example of this synthesis, combining Islamic and Western modernist elements in their educational approach.

◆ *Emergence of the public sphere*

English education, while serving as a tool for missionary work and a means to fulfil Britain's imperial mission, also played a significant role in fostering critical thinking among educated Indians. This was particularly true for the upper-caste Hindus, who, influenced by post-Enlightenment rationalism, began to question traditional values. The exposure to such rationalism led to the emergence of a public sphere where social issues were openly discussed. Scientific education was promoted as a symbol of progress, and intellectuals and organisations led these discussions, spreading their ideas through print culture. Newspapers and pamphlets played a major role in this process. Thus, English education was instrumental in shaping new ideologies, promoting critical thinking and scientific education, and laying the groundwork for social reforms and the transformation of Indian identity during the colonial era.

### **1.3.2 Shift towards English Education and Colonial Modernisation**

During its early years, the East India Company adopted a policy of nonintervention in Indian social affairs. It was characterised by a pragmatic approach that prioritised the continuation of existing systems and respect for traditional Indian culture. This approach, illustrated by Warren Hastings's policy of Orientalism, involved studying Indian culture through Sanskrit and Persian scriptures and





◆ *Shift in policy*

incorporating this knowledge into governance practices. Consequently, institutions like the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Calcutta Madrasa, and the Sanskrit College at Banaras were established to facilitate understanding of the subject population's customs, manners, and codes, essential for effective governance.

◆ *Intervention in Indian Social Affairs*

Warren Hastings's policy, which emphasised governance that respected indigenous customs and resisted Anglicisation, was a significant approach during the early years of the East India Company. However, the end of Hastings's tenure marked a gradual shift towards cautious intervention in Indian social institutions. This shift was influenced by various ideologies from Britain, such as Evangelicalism, Utilitarianism, and free trade thinking. Utilitarians advocated for social engineering and authoritarian reformism, while evangelicals sought government intervention to liberate Indians from what they perceived as superstitions and idolatry. Free trade thinkers aimed to liberate the Indian economy from traditional constraints to promote trade. Despite these ideological influences, the Company's government remained hesitant to intervene significantly, fearing adverse Indian reactions. However, the introduction of English education in the late 18th century was a crucial area of intervention. It was initially introduced for European and Anglo-Indian children, and English education gained traction as a means of reforming Indian society. Charles Grant advocated for English education as a tool to showcase Western moral and ethical values. He viewed Christian instruction as a means to prevent rebellion and assimilate Indians into colonial projects.

◆ *Education*

The Charter Act of 1813 was a major milestone in allocating funds for the promotion of education among Indians. While the immediate concern was the corruption of Company officials and territorial control, this decision paved the way for the development of Western education in India. However, the nature of the education remained ambiguous. The establishment of Sanskrit and Oriental colleges, along with patronage for indigenous learning institutions, reflected the continued influence of Orientalist ideologies.

◆ *Introduction of Western education*

The introduction of English education was a crucial departure from traditional indigenous learning in India. Christian missionaries and Europeans like David Hare played instrumental roles in establishing English-medium schools across the country, gradually shifting public attention away from indigenous classical learning. The establishment of the

♦ *Modernisation through education*

Calcutta School Book Society and later the Calcutta School Society further promoted vernacular schools for elementary education.

Raja Rammohun Roy wrote a memorandum to the governor-general protesting against the founding of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta. Roy represented a generation of Indians advocating for modernisation through English education and the dissemination of Western sciences. The ascendancy of Utilitarian reformist William Bentinck as governor-general in 1828 and Thomas Babington Macaulay as the law member in his council in 1834 marked a definitive shift towards Anglicist education policies. Macaulay's famous Minute on Indian Education in 1835 became the blueprint for the introduction of English education in India. Disdainful of Oriental learning, Macaulay advocated for an education system focused on European literature and sciences delivered through the medium of English. This education, he argued, would create a class of individuals who were Indian in blood but English in taste, opinions, morals, and intellect. Bentinck's endorsement of Macaulay's proposals solidified the Anglicist agenda despite protests from Orientalists. This announced the beginning of a new modernisation project for India, where knowledge production was centralised while its dissemination was left to the colonised people. English education was seen as a means to incorporate Indians into the structure of colonial rule, promoting Western moral and ethical ideals.

♦ *Preference for higher education*

The theory of 'downward filtration' characterised the new English education policy, targeting the rich, learned, and business-oriented individuals who could act as teachers to disseminate knowledge further. While reports advocating for the improvement of vernacular education were ignored, experiments with vernacular elementary schools in certain regions, such as the North-Western Provinces, showed promise, hinting at a potentially brighter future for vernacular education. However, the focus remained on promoting English education and higher education at the expense of classical and vernacular learning. The creation of universities in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in 1857 further emphasised this shift, albeit with a growing concern for the political economy of the empire. While elementary mass education received attention, higher education continued to be prioritised to meet the administrative needs of the empire.



### 1.3.3 Emergence of Public Sphere and Print Culture

#### ◆ *Exclusionary practices*

The Indian Education Commission of 1882 attempted to address the dual education system by emphasising the need for general literacy across the population, particularly for backward communities. However, exclusionary practices persisted, with groups like the Dalits or 'untouchables' being excluded from state schools to appease the higher-caste pupils who were the primary targets of colonial education.

#### ◆ *Motives*

English education in India served various motives. For missionaries, it was a tool for proselytisation, while Utilitarians saw it as fulfilling Britain's imperial mission. The East India Company sought to recruit Indians to subordinate positions in the administrative structure by providing English education to train individuals for public services. However, English education also aimed to instil loyalty among Indian subjects and perpetuate colonial hegemony.

#### ◆ *Emergence of the public sphere*

English education in India aimed to inculcate industriousness, efficiency, and compliance among native subjects, but it also played a significant role in fostering critical thinking among educated Indians. This critical thinking, fostered by English education, led to a questioning of traditional values and social norms by predominantly Hindu upper-caste males from middle and lower-income groups. The intellectual impact of English education is evident in the way it brought Indian youth into contact with post-Enlightenment rationalism, shaping their understanding of modernity and progress. It fostered the emergence of a public sphere in India, albeit limited, where issues affecting society were debated publicly through newspapers and voluntary associations. This new elite viewed science as a universal sign of modernity and progress and advocated for its incorporation into the education system, thereby significantly shaping modern Indian society.

#### ◆ *Spread of Science and print culture*

The discourse on science and modernisation was spearheaded by enlightened intellectuals and organisations like the Society for Translating European Sciences and the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. This movement, initially centred in Calcutta, spread to other provinces through the development of print culture and contributed to the broader discourse on the power of science in Indian society.

### 1.3.4 Reform Movements and its Limitations

#### ♦ *Narrow social base*

The social and religious reform movements of the nineteenth century in India had several distinctive features that shaped their impact and reach. Firstly, these movements were largely confined to a narrow social space which appealed primarily to a small elite group known as the 'bhadralok', or gentlemen. This elite group consisted of Western-educated individuals who benefited economically and culturally from colonial rule. In Bengal, for example, the reform movement was spearheaded by a small number of Western-educated elites, predominantly from the Brahmin, Kayastha, and Baidya castes. The Brahmo movement, for instance, was patronised mainly by these groups but remained distant from the masses. The language and discourse of reform were often steeped in chaste Sanskritised Bengali prose, which was incomprehensible to the uneducated peasants and artisans. It further alienated them from these movements. Similarly, in western India, groups like the Prarthana Samaj primarily consisted of English-educated Chitpavan and Saraswat Brahmins, some Gujarati merchants, and a few Parsis. These movements had limited membership and sympathisers, which indicated their narrow social base.

#### ♦ *Silence on the caste question*

In regions where English education progressed slowly, such as the Madras Presidency, reform ideas took longer to emerge, and caste domination remained unchallenged. The reform movements of the early nineteenth century were predominantly led by high-caste individuals, which resulted in a relative silence on the issue of caste. Issues like untouchability only gained prominence in social reform discourse in the early twentieth century, particularly with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi.

#### ♦ *Reliance on scriptures*

Early nineteenth-century reformers, constrained by their limited social base, often showed faith in the benevolent nature of colonial rule and relied on legislation to implement reforms from above. They focused less on building reformist awareness at the grassroots level, which allowed later religious revivalism to gain traction among the masses. The colonial influence on social reforms was significant, as reformers' views frequently aligned with colonial attitudes and reflected the mixed feelings of colonial officials. Colonial assumptions held that religion was the core of Indian society, with scriptures seen as its essence. This view suggested that religious scriptures dictate Indian society fully and that social issues arose from misinterpretations of these texts by certain Brahmin priests to serve their own interests. The



colonial state's civilising mission was thus perceived as a way to restore the original truths of these scriptures to the native population.

◆ *Agency denied to women*

The debate over practices like *sati* illustrates this colonial perspective, as the decision to prohibit *sati* was made based on whether scriptures sanctioned it. Both Indian reformers and their detractors referenced ancient religious texts in arguing their cases, with less emphasis on the brutality or irrationality of customs and more on defining tradition. In this discourse, women were often marginalised, serving as the backdrop for debates rather than active participants. The valorisation of scriptures by Orientalists lent legitimacy to social reforms, but women were often denied agency in their emancipation. Similar dynamics played out in debates over issues like widow remarriage and the prohibition of female infanticide, where scriptures were invoked to justify or oppose reforms. Women's issues were thus framed within the context of tradition and scripture, relegating women themselves to the periphery of the discourse.

◆ *Tradition versus modernisation dichotomy*

The tensions within colonial modernity become apparent when considering that Indian reformist discourses were not merely reflections of colonial formulations. While figures like Rammohan Roy used scriptures to advocate for reforms like the abolition of *sati*, his early writings also contained humanistic pleas to improve the condition of Indian womanhood. Roy's rationalism predated colonial influence, reflecting an intrinsic ambivalence shaped by colonial context. This ambivalence challenges the notion of a stark tradition versus modernisation dichotomy in understanding nineteenth-century Indian reform. Despite seeking support and direction from the colonial state and being influenced by post-Enlightenment rationality, Indian modernisers couldn't entirely abandon their tradition or forget their Indian identity. Their modernisation project aimed to adapt Indian society to Western modernity while preserving Hindu tradition. This project aimed to construct a modernity within Indian cultural space, reflecting the essence of Indian nationhood and its distinction from the colonising West. However, the inherent tensions within this cultural enterprise made it vulnerable to a strong revival of traditionalism in the late nineteenth century. Later, cultural movements faced the challenge of navigating and responding to colonial interpretations of Indian tradition while asserting their own identities.



### 1.3.5 Womens' Movements

The women's movements in colonial India emerged as part of broader social reform efforts in the 19th century, driven largely by the transformations brought about by British rule. These movements were spearheaded by a new class of Indian intelligentsia, who had been educated in Western ideas of rationalism, liberalism, and humanism. This group of reformers sought to modernise Indian society by addressing various social evils, particularly those affecting women, while also attempting to preserve and redefine Indian traditions. Raja Rammohun Roy and Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar played major roles in these early reform movements. Raja Rammohun Roy, often regarded as the 'father of the Indian Renaissance', led campaigns against the practice of *sati*—where widows were compelled or encouraged to immolate themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres. Similarly, Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar fought tirelessly for the rights of widows, advocating for widow remarriage and opposing the practice of child marriage. These reformers also promoted women's education, recognising it as a key factor in the upliftment of society. However, their vision for women's education was limited by their desire to create a new type of Indian woman—one who was educated but still rooted in traditional values. This meant that women's education was often framed not as a means of emancipation but as a way to make them better wives and mothers, reinforcing the existing patriarchal structure rather than challenging it.

♦ *Women's question*

During that time, many young girls were married off at a very young age, and when their husbands died, they were forced to live a life full of hardships and restrictions. Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar strongly argued for the right of widows to remarry and even published a book on the subject in 1853. The combined efforts of Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, and D.K. Karve led to the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856. In the South, Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu led a similar movement, organising 63 widow remarriages in the Madras Presidency in 1874 and supporting men who married widows by providing them with houses and other benefits.

♦ *Widow Remarriage Act*

Another critical issue that reformers addressed was the age of marriage for girls. In the 19th century, girls were often married as young as 8 or 9 years old. Reformers like Vidyasagar advocated for raising the age of marriage, leading to the British government passing the Age of Consent Bill in

♦ *Age of Consent Bill*



1860, which made it illegal for girls under 10 to engage in sexual relations. Reformers like Mahadev Govind Ranade, Behramji Malabari, and Tej Bahadur Sapru continued to push for further reforms. In 1891, the Age of Consent Bill was passed, raising the minimum age for girls' marriage to 12 years.

◆ *Periyar's contribution*

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy made significant strides in advancing women's rights in India. Periyar, active in political and social reform from the 1920s, was a staunch supporter of women's involvement as equal partners in these movements. He encouraged widespread participation of women in the Vaikom Satyagraha, with his wife Nagammai also contributing significantly. Periyar's advocacy extended to the Chengalpet Self-Respect Conference in 1929, where he and the Self-Respecters passed resolutions supporting women's equal property rights, widow remarriage, the abolition of child marriage, the freedom to choose spouses beyond caste and community norms, and encouraging women to pursue professions of their choice. His efforts were driven by the belief that women's liberation was essential for ending broader societal oppression.

◆ *V.T.Bhattathiripad's contribution*

V.T.Bhattathiripad made notable contributions to women's rights in Kerala. In 1934, despite considerable resistance, he was instrumental in passing a resolution supporting widow remarriage and arranged for Mulla Mangalath Raman Bhattathiripad to marry a widow. He conducted the first mixed-race marriage in the Brahmin community, setting a precedent for social integration. He wrote several influential works, including the play *Adukkalayail Ninnu Arangathekk* and his memoirs *Kanneerum Kinavum*, which are popular in Malayalam literature. He worked to reform the conservative practices of the Namboothiri community, challenging traditional norms.

◆ *Women's education*

Social reformers believed that educating women could help eliminate social evils and strengthen family structures. In Calcutta, men like Radhakanta Deb and Keshub Chandra Sen, along with organisations like the Brahmo Samaj, took initiatives for female education. Similarly, figures like Mahadev Govind Ranade and the Prarthana Samaj in western India, Swami Dayanand and the Arya Samaj in north India, and Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society in Madras also contributed to the cause.

Raja Rammohun Roy and other reformers supported

◆ *Efforts towards female education*

female education, leading to the establishment of girls' schools and homes for widows. Vidyasagar, for example, founded 48 girls' schools between 1855 and 1858 while serving as an inspector of schools. M.G. Ranade and his wife also promoted female education by starting a girls' high school in 1884. D.K. Karve recognised that simply passing laws like the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 was not enough in a society deeply rooted in tradition. He focused on educating widows to make them self-reliant. In 1896, Karve founded the Ananth Balikashram, where widows could receive an education. He later established the Mahila Vidyalaya in 1907 and S.N.D.T. (Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey) Women's University in 1916, providing separate educational institutions for women to reduce resistance from the more conservative sections of society.

◆ *Women's efforts towards the cause*

As the social reform movement progressed, women began to take up the cause themselves. For example, Pandita Ramabai started Sharda Sadan in Bombay in 1889 to provide a refuge for destitute high-caste widows. In 1912-1913, Sister Subbulakshmi, herself a widow, established a widow's home in Madras to support women in similar situations. Among Indian-educated women, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain in Bengal played a significant role in promoting female education. Also, certain families and organisations, such as the Bilgramis in Hyderabad, the Tyabjis in Bombay, the Mians in Lahore, and associations like Anjuman-i-Himayati-Islam, Anjuman-i-Islam, and the Nizam's government in Hyderabad, took initiatives for the education of Muslim women across the country.

◆ *Colonial state's interest*

The colonial government also showed interest in female education, particularly during the administration of Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856). J.E. Drinkwater Bethune, the law member in the governor general's council, established a girls' school in Calcutta in 1849, which later became well known. However, despite these efforts, female education progressed slowly, with 98 percent of women of school-going age remaining uneducated by 1882 when the Hunter Commission was appointed. In response, the Hunter Commission recommended liberal grants-in-aid and special scholarships for women's education. Over the next two decades, there were improvements in women's enrollment in universities and secondary schools. However, the figures remained relatively small compared to the total female population of the country.

The progress of women's education at the turn of the



◆ *Confinement of women*

◆ *Educated bhadramahila*

century did not significantly improve their social conditions, as the motivations behind the education movement were not aimed at women's emancipation. The colonial government advocated female education to ensure that Indian civil servants were married to educated wives, promoting stable households and breeding loyal subjects. Similarly, educated Indian middle-class males envisioned companionate marriages based on Victorian ideals, where educated women would fulfil the roles of ideal companions, wives, and mothers. In Bengal, the concept of the educated bhadramahila (gentlewoman) emerged as the ideal companion to the enlightened Hindu bhadralok, blending the self-sacrificing Hindu wife with the Victorian helpmate. However, instead of emancipating women, education further confined them to idealised domestic roles as good wives and mothers. Educated women who deviated from these roles were perceived as threats to the moral order and societal stability.

◆ *Influence on personal laws*

While voices of protest against such stereotyping were rare, some women, like Tarabai Shinde and Pandita Ramabai, challenged social norms more directly. Shinde protested against gender inequalities and traditional restrictions on women. At the same time, Ramabai defied social norms by remaining unmarried for a long time, marrying outside her caste, pursuing education and independence, and advocating for women's rights. However, such rebels were exceptions, as most educated women adhered to social boundaries. Both the indigenous elite and the colonial state sought to confine women to domestic roles, viewing the domestic sphere as a safe space for women and the state. This consensus between the colonial state and nationalist male elites was evident in both customary Hindu and Islamic personal laws and new statutory laws, which upheld patriarchal family structures and restricted women's freedom of choice.

By the late 19th century, social reform movements had led to the elimination of some social evils and increased opportunities for women's education, resulting in a new generation of educated middle-class women who began to engage in political activities. This marked the beginning of a more active involvement of women in the national movement, which, until 1919, had been largely limited to the urban upper classes. With Gandhi's entry into the movement, participation expanded to include the masses. During the Swadeshi Movement of 1905, sparked by the partition of Bengal,

♦ *Early 20th-century women movements*

women contributed by attending meetings, spinning khadi, and donating jewellery and grain to the national cause, with involvement from women in Bengal and Punjab. Some figures like Swarna Kumari and Sarala Devi, along with activists such as Mrs. Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madam Bhikaji Rustum, played significant roles in promoting women's rights and engaging in revolutionary activities. This period also saw the formation of several women's organisations, including the Bharat Stri Maha Mandal (1910) in Lahore, aimed at uniting women from various backgrounds for their progress, and the Kanchi Mahila Parishad, which worked to educate women and address national issues. From 1911 to 1918, Annie Besant became the first woman president of the Indian National Congress, leading the Home Rule League and raising the profile of women's political rights. This era saw the establishment of the Women's Indian Association (1917) and the National Council of Women in India (1920), which focused on influencing government policies and promoting women's interests. Regional organisations like Pandita Ramabai Sharda Sadan (1892) in Poona and the Maternity and Child Welfare League in Baroda (1914) laid the groundwork for national efforts, culminating in the All India Women's Conference (1926), which organised numerous conferences and aimed to improve women's civic and public lives.

## Summarised Overview

In 19th-century colonial India, British rule greatly impacted Indian society by introducing Western values and policies that aimed to modernise the country according to British ideals. The British implemented policies based on ideas like Evangelicalism, utilitarianism, and Victorian paternalism. These ideas shaped their governance and reforms, particularly in education and law. They viewed Indian culture through a lens that justified their dominance, promoting Western values while diminishing local traditions. One major change was the introduction of English education, which focused on spreading Western knowledge and values. While there were some attempts to include local languages, the emphasis remained on English, which helped the British to control the administration and the economy. This shift created a new educated class in India, who began to push for national development and scientific education.

In terms of social reforms, figures like Raja Rammohun Roy and Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar worked to address practices such as *sati* and child marriage. Their efforts aimed to modernise society but often focused on improving women's roles





within traditional structures rather than challenging the underlying patriarchy. Meanwhile, religious movements like the Arya Samaj and Theosophical Society advocated for reforms like widow remarriage and opposed child marriage within their religious contexts. The increased focus on women's education led many educated women to become actively involved in political activities. Overall, this period shows how British colonial policies and cultural impositions restructured Indian society, influencing education, social reforms, and the role of women. The interaction between colonial control and indigenous responses influenced the path towards modernity in India.

## Assignments

1. Explain the significance of the Orientalist-Anglicist debate in nineteenth-century India.
2. Discuss Edward Said's critique of Orientalism. How does his analysis challenge traditional Western views of the East?
3. Analyse the impact of English education on Indian society in the nineteenth century. How did it contribute to the formation of a new Indian elite?
4. Evaluate the strengths and limitations of the social and religious reform movements in India during the nineteenth century. How did these movements address issues of social equality and women's rights?
5. Examine the role of women's movements in the emancipation of women in the Colonial period.

## Suggested Reading

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### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

# Emergence of Nationalism and The Beginning of Struggle

## **BLOCK-02**





# Genesis of Indian Nationalism

## Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ identify the impact of British rule in India
- ◆ assess the role of socio-religious reform movements and their impact on national consciousness
- ◆ critically evaluate the concept of re-discovery of India's past

## Background

Nationalism in India developed during the British era as a result of the development of various subjective and objective forces and causes within Indian society under the international influences as well as British. Indian nationalism developed through a highly intricate and multifaceted process. India before the British Empire had a very distinct social structure – possibly without any historical parallels. Its economic foundation was very different from that of pre-capitalist medieval European societies. Moreover, India was a large nation with a sizable population that practiced a variety of religions and spoke numerous languages. Socially, the two-thirds Hindu population was nearly fragmented into different castes and subcastes. The wide socio-economic and theological division that exists between Indians in general and Hindus in particular created a specific setting that allowed nationalism to flourish in India.

Indian nationalism developed across a number of phases. Its social base expanded, its objectives grew bigger and more specific, and its techniques of expression became more varied as it progressed through several phases. The influence of both Indian and international factors led to the growing strata of Indian society, developing a feeling of national identity and vision, which brought them into the nationalist movement. This awakening found expression in many social, political, and cultural spheres of national life.





## Keywords

Commercialisation, Drain of Wealth, Modern intelligentsi, Socio-religious movements, Nationalism, Ilbert-Bill centrouersy

## Discussion

### 2.1.1. Impact of British Rule

#### ◆ *Spirit of Transformation*

Before the end of the nineteenth century, virtually British India saw a great transformation. The impact of the West through the introduction of English education is the most significant single aspect that explains this profound transformation. This change had significant consequences on people's material and moral lives. To understand how this transformation functioned in Indian life, it is essential to examine religious and social changes, the growth of the literature and press, and the evolution of literature political ideas and structures.

#### 2.1.1.1. Impact on Polity

##### The Downfall of Native Rulers

#### ◆ *Expansion of British rule*

The East India Company took control of India and overthrew the native rulers. State after state disappeared, replaced by the new systems of administration and governance under the English East India Company. The British even indirectly controlled administration in areas where the indigenous leaders were not driven out. When Lord Dalhousie arrived in India in 1848 as Governor-General, he was intent on expanding British direct rule over the greatest possible territory. "The extinction of all native states of India is just a question of time," he had predicted. He justified this tactic by stating that British rule was far better than the oppressive and corrupt administration of the native rulers.

#### ◆ *Doctrine of Lapse*

The Doctrine of Lapse served as the main tool used by Lord Dalhousie to carry out his annexation plans. According to this doctrine, a protected state's ruler who passed away without a natural heir was not entitled to have his state passed to an adopted heir, as permitted by national tradition. Rather, unless the adoption had received explicit prior approval from British officials, it was to be annexed to the British dominions. Using this concept, several states were



annexed, notably Satara in 1848 and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854.

◆ *Negation of titles and Pensions*

Moreover, Dalhousie declined to honour the titles and pensions of former rulers of native states. As a result, the titles of the Raja of Tanjore, the Nawabs of Carnatic and Surat, and others were eliminated. Likewise, at the demise of former Peshwa Baji Rao II, who was appointed as the ruler of Bengal, Dalhousie refused to provide a pension to his adopted son, Nana Saheb. Lord Dalhousie had a strong desire to conquer the kingdom of Avadh. However, the task presented several challenges. Over time, the Nawabs of Avadh had grown increasingly submissive to the British and had been their allies since the Battle of Buxar. Since the Nawab of Avadh had multiple heirs, the Doctrine of Lapse could not be applied to him.

◆ *Influence of Western Culture*

### **Growth of Modern Political Concepts**

The influence of Western culture on India has led to the rise of modern political ideas like nationalism, patriotism, and political rights. Bengal, particularly during the first half of the 1800s, played a significant role in the Indian freedom movement. During this period, Bengal was profoundly influenced by the development of political ideas.

◆ *Role of Raja Rammohan Roy*

Raja Rammohan Roy took the lead and set an example for others in the fight for political rights. He vehemently opposed the Press Ordinance of 1823. This, in his opinion, was a grave violation of the civil liberties that Indians were entitled to while living under British rule. He is considered the father of 'Organised Politics in India', and his approach is credited with igniting the movement that would later be called constitutional agitation. At the time, it was widely accepted that he had a major influence on the beneficial measures in the Charter Act of 1831. Public gatherings were also becoming popular at this time to raise public opinion on political issues.

◆ *Landholders Society*

Dwaraka Nath raised his voice for the significance of forming political alliances. He had a major role in the establishment of the "Landholders' Society" in July 1838. For three reasons, it is worth noticing, even though its main goal was to protect the landholders' interests. First off, it may rightly be said that "it may be regarded as the pioneer of freedom in this country," as Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra stated. Secondly, it taught people the fundamentals of fighting for their rights and constitutionally voicing their opinions.

Finally, it purportedly supported the Zamindars' rights, but as their rights are inextricably linked to the ryots', the two cannot be distinguished from one another.

### **Political and Administrative Unification of India**

One of the major outcomes of the British conquest of India was "the establishment of a centralised state," which led to the first-ever political and administrative unification of the country for the first time in Indian history. Before the British period, India was fragmented into numerous states. The British established a unified legal system across the nation. They passed laws codified. Every state resident was subject to these laws, which were upheld by the state's judicial sector, that was composed of a hierarchically ranked system of courts. The administrative unity was facilitated by the establishment of hierarchically graded public services by the British. The executive branch of the centralised state was thus established, consisting of imperial, provincial, and subordinate services.

- ◆ *Introduction of a unified system of Law*
- ◆ *Political unification of India*

### **2.1.1.2. Impact on Economy**

#### **Rise of New Social Class**

Britain, a capitalist country, significantly impacted India's economic structure. Without displacing the foundation of Indian society, Britain was unable to exploit colonial India for her own capitalist economic needs and establish capitalist economic structures there. The emergence of new social economies, political structures and administrative apparatuses during British rule all directly contributed to the creation of new social classes in India. This is a result of the fundamental economic structure of Indian society brought about by capitalism. The Indian people were reorganised into new social groups and classes.

- ◆ *Establishment of a Capitalist economy*

During the British colonial era, a new social hierarchy emerged in Indian society. They are primarily: (1) British-created zamindars; (2) absentee landowners; (3) tenants under zamindars and absentee landlords; (4) the peasant proprietor class, which was separated into upper, middle, and lower strata; and (5) agricultural labourers (6) the modern class of moneylenders and (7) the modern class of merchants.

- ◆ *Emergence of a new social strata*

The British established modern industries and transport systems in India. It created new classes, such as capitalists, industrial workers, agricultural labourers, tenants, and



◆ *Rise of New Classes*

merchants connected to trade and foreign industries, along with the dying class of artisans and handicrafts. This change altered the social physiognomy and economic anatomy of Indian society, replacing the dying class of artisans and handicrafts with a new class of merchants.

### **Introduction of Private Property in Land**

◆ *Types of Property*

The existing land system in India transformed the British conquest of India. The traditional village community right over its land was displaced by the new revenue system that the British introduced in India. The new system created two different types of property: landlordism in some regions and individual peasant proprietorship in others.

◆ *Establishment of Landlordism*

In 1793, Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Land Settlement in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, which led to the establishment of the first set of landlords (landlordism) in India. Tax farmers in these provinces were chosen by the British to collect taxes on a commission basis, which gave rise to these landowners. The East India Company required regional leaders and petty chiefs to pay specified amounts as tribute. Additionally, the Company transformed these chiefs into a class of landowners by assuming their political, military, and administrative powers and converting their tribute into income. Those who provided significant military or other assistance to the British government were often rewarded with land and elevated to the status of landlords.

### **Commercialisation of Agriculture**

◆ *Replacement of the traditional system*

Raw materials became more and more necessary as England's modern industries expanded due to industrialisation. In order to meet the growing demands for raw materials by the British industries, the British government implemented new economic policies in India. As a result, it accelerated India's agricultural specialisation and commercialisation. One outcome of the new land relations and income payment system, which was implemented in the form of fixed money payments, was the replacement of the traditional village agricultural strategy of producing for village consumption with market-driven goals. The character of the production and products changed as a result of the new goal of selling them.

During British rule, peasants primarily produced for the market. They cultivated land to meet the state's high demands for land revenue and to satisfy the claims of moneylenders. This led to the commercialisation of agriculture, forcing

♦ *Agricultural specialisation*

peasants to cultivate cash crops like cotton, jute, wheat, sugarcane, and oil seed. The land was only used for the production of these types of crops, resulting in the rise of the commercialisation of agriculture and the rise of moneylenders. The commercialisation of agriculture also paved the way for the cultivation of special crops.

### **Decline of Traditional Indian Village Industries**

♦ *Changes in traditional villages*

The transition of a village from an independent hamlet to an administrative division of the centralised state and a reliant contributor to the domestic economy happened gradually. The administrative and economic autonomy of the traditional villages had completely vanished. The nature of traditional villages changed gradually. A competitive and conflict-driven living in the village replaced the cooperative relationships and shared economic interests that characterised collective village life. Formerly cooperative socio-economic ties gave way to competitive economic relations brought about by private property and the market system.

♦ *Impact on Village economy*

The commercialisation of village agriculture and the decline of village industries, driven by the influx of cheap, machine-made goods from Britain, severely disrupted the once-balanced Indian village economy. As a result, the fundamental foundation of the self-sufficient village economy suffered. The independent village's economic foundation was under threat. The village community lost more than just its customary ownership of the village land. It also forfeited its right to unrestricted access to nearby pasture and forest areas. The peasants and other local residents utilised pasture and forest areas for livestock grazing and fuel sourcing. It also weakened the self-governing nature of the village communities. Furthermore, the upkeep of the village's overall economy and agriculture depended heavily on these regions.

### **Spread of Famine**

During the British period, Indian farmers were forced to make goods for both the global and Indian markets. As a result, they were exposed to all of the instability of the constantly fluctuating market. The large agrarian trusts in America, Europe, and Australia were among their fiercest international competitors. They produced on a large scale using tractors and other modern agricultural machinery while they personally tilled small plots of land using the



◆ *Facing international competition*

labour of a few starving bullocks and an antiquated plough. Additionally, this commercialisation forced the peasants to rely on middlemen, or merchants, in order to sell their produce. Because of their better financial standing, the merchants fully exploited the peasants. The impoverished peasant, lacking financial reserves and facing the government's revenue demands, as well as the usurer's growing claims, was forced to sell his goods to the intermediary during harvest. The peasant received less from this transaction. As a result, the intermediary grabbed a substantial portion of the profit.

◆ *Causes of Poverty*

In India, famines became increasingly frequent and devastating, not only due to food shortages but also as a direct consequence of the poverty imposed by colonial rule. Between 1850 and 1900, these famines claimed the lives of nearly 2.8 crore people. The number of farmers experiencing poverty increased due to a number of additional factors. Apart from recurring agricultural crises and other economic events, farmers often experienced financial distress due to non-social factors like drought or heavy rainfall. In times of hardships, the Indian peasants scarcely had any financial reserves to fall back on. Due to poor monsoons, a significant fraction of Indian peasants were unable to pay land revenue, leading to mounting debt. Farmers struggled to feed themselves and their families and could not maintain healthy livestock. As the number of bullocks increased, the amount of food available to them decreased. This accelerated along the decrease in agricultural production and resulted in the communities being "overstocked with herds of wretched, starving cattle".

**Increased Rural Indebtedness**

◆ *Increase in Agricultural Debt*

Throughout British rule, Indian peasant's overall debt increased gradually. It increased from one decade to the next. Even in 1880, there was a significant increase in the amount of agricultural debt. At least an equal proportion were in debt, though not beyond the power of recovering themselves, and one-third of the landholding classes were deeply and inextricably in debt. Since 1880, the amount of debt held by rural residents has been rising. According to the Simon Report, "the vast majority of peasants live in debt to the moneylender." Over the years, several attempts have been made to evaluate the enormous levels of agricultural debt. The Indian agricultural classes were severely impacted by the global economic crisis of 1929. Due to the disastrous decline in prices of agricultural products, they suffered such

severe losses between 1929 and 1936 that their entire debt ballooned to an astonishing amount of Rs. 1,800 crores. The primary reason for this extraordinary rise is that, despite a more than 50% decrease in farmers' wages since 1929, the taxes paid by the peasantry remained unchanged.

### Emergence of Serfdom

In many parts of India, peasants have been reduced to the level of serfs due to debt. Modern debt led to the development of a medieval form of economic enslavement. The rich moneylender benefited from the new legal system, as litigation was more costly compared to the impoverished peasants. A poor agriculturist, barely able to support himself on his salary, could not even mobilise the expensive legal services of lawyers, unlike the former, who could afford to hire lawyers and endure the long legal proceedings. Generally, the moneylender made full use of the situation to enforce his claims. These factors were crucial in driving the extreme poverty of Indian peasants, leading to mounting debt and a decline in agricultural productivity due to unprofitable holdings and outdated methods.

◆ *Transition from peasants to serfs*

The profound impoverishment and debt of the Indian peasants eventually resulted in their land being taken by the landlord, moneylender, or trader. The landowning peasants became fewer in number. In various regions of the country, employment practices involving serfs and semi-serfs became widespread. The lowest class of Indian society was made up of Dublas and Halis in Gujarat, Padial in Tamil Nadu, Bhagela in Hyderabad, Barsalia in the C.P., and similar groupings in other regions. They were subjected to social and economic enslavement and nearly medieval conditions. Decrease in Landowning peasants

◆ *Decrease in Landowning peasants*

### Decline of Handicrafts

For several reasons, the English East India Company's reign was detrimental to India's handicraft sector. The primary reason was that it devastated the native states, the biggest clients and patrons of the handicraft sector. The second reason was the English East India Company, a foreign corporation governed by a foreign authority, which implemented policies detrimental to India's manufacturing sector. Additionally, as a trading corporation, its primary goal was to produce goods at low costs and sell them for profit in other markets. The Indian towns comprised the majority of the handicraft markets, and they frequently employed



◆ *Disappearance of Traditional Handicraft*

some of the best artisans and ran enormous factories and workshops. Consequently, their decline and disappearance “struck the first blow at Indian handicrafts by gradually reducing the demand for their products.” This resulted in the abrupt cessation of manufacturing of the finest class of commodities, which were only needed by the most esteemed princes and nobles during significant state occasions.

◆ *Restrictions on handicrafters*

The high taxes imposed by England on Indian goods made it even more necessary to reduce the price of the goods it purchased in order to keep profits at the same level. It monopolised weavers and other handicrafters in order to achieve this goal, forcing them to manufacture goods at a fixed price. The Company made handicrafters into virtual enslaved people by forbidding them from selling their goods to Indian or other foreign merchants for a higher price. Fourthly, it established transit restrictions and enforced customs in India, which made it impossible for Indian traders to conduct successful internal trade.

### **Decline of Indian Industries**

◆ *Impact on Indian Industry*

Furthermore, a number of Indian industries were severely impacted by the different policies implemented to meet the demands of the growing British industry. The Court of Directors’s decision to forbid Indian ships from being used for trade and to only employ British ships had a catastrophic impact on the Indian maritime sector. During this period, the British policy of restricting Indian paper imports to British-made paper further hurt the country’s paper industry. The situation worsened when Sir Charles Wood issued an order mandating that the British government in India use only the paper manufactured in the United Kingdom, stripping the Indian paper industry of its largest support.

◆ *Falling of Indian industries*

The iron smelting industries also suffered significant losses, as their primary customers – the native states – were either eliminated or saw a decline. The British government imposed prohibitory duties on the importation of their products from England. Additionally, the new government’s preference for British iron products proved essential for their goals. These factors ultimately led to their ruin. Furthermore, the iron smelting industry suffered from a great rise in the price of charcoal due to the preservation of forests, the extension of railways, and competition for imported pig iron. An unwise tariff and the discovery of Chilli nitrates gave a serious shock to the saltpetre industry. Consequently, during this

period, industry after industry began falling apart as a result of certain policies implemented by the British government to accommodate their needs.

Since England became a political force in India, her main methods of destroying Indian industries have been:

◆ *Methods of  
Destroying Indian  
Industries*

1. Forced adoption of free trade.
2. Enforcing strict tariffs in England on Indian manufacturers.
3. Export of raw materials from India.
4. Customs charges and transit.
5. Giving the exclusive rights to the British.
6. Pressuring Indian artisans to reveal their trade secrets.
7. Holding on displays

### **Rise and Development of Modern Industries**

◆ *Development of  
Indian Nationalism*

The consolidation of India's national economy was greatly aided by the development of modern machine-based industries during the British colonial era. Additionally, it produced social factors that fuelled the nationalist movement and the expansion of Indian nationalism. It is generally accepted that India's industrial development was uneven and insufficient for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the Industrial Revolution produced strong social forces that aided in the advancement of the country. In addition, the development of modern industries gave rise to new social classes like the proletariat and bourgeoisie, the two fundamental classes whose influence on the direction of modern society was considered significant, if not decisive.

◆ *Modern  
industries in India*

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the British were the predecessors in creating modern industries in India, including plantation industries like indigo, tea, and coffee. The first cotton mill, a few jute mills, and coal mines were established between 1850 and 1855. India had fifty-six cotton mills in 1879. In 1882, there were 20 jute mills, the majority of which were owned by Europeans. There were 56 operational coal mines in the nation in 1880. The steady growth of the Indian industries at this time encouraged nationalist economists like Ranade, who saw a bright industrial future for the country.



## Drain of Wealth

### ◆ Economic Drain

The British exported a portion of India's wealth and resources to Britain in exchange for insufficient economic or material return. The term used for this kind of economic drain is 'drain of wealth'. This 'economic drain' was unique under British rule. The native Indian rulers who ruled India spent their revenue on the construction of irrigation canals and trunk roads, palaces, temples, and mosques. It ultimately boosted Indian trade and industry or created employment opportunities for Indians. However, Englishmen who worked and traded in India almost always had the intention of spending their earnings when they got back home.

### ◆ Flow of Indian wealth

The flow of wealth from Bengal began in 1757 when the Company's servants began to take home enormous wealth extorted from Indian rulers, zamindars, merchants, and people in general. From 1758 to 1765, they sent over 6 million to their home. This amount exceeded the Nawab of Bengal's total land revenue collection in 1765 by more than fourfold. This flow did not include the Company's trading gains, which were frequently obtained illegally.

### ◆ Investments

In 1765, the Company acquired the *Diwani* of Bengal and gained control of its revenues. The Company, rather than its servants, quickly organised the drain directly. It began to purchase Indian goods from Bengal and exported them. These purchases were referred to as investments. As a result, Bengal's revenue was shifted to England via 'Investments'. For example, between 1765 and 1770, the Company supplied about four million pounds in products, accounting for around 33% of Bengal's net revenue. The actual drain was far greater, as a significant portion of English officials' wages and other profits, as well as English merchants' trade fortunes, found their way into England.

## 2.1.1.3.Social Impact

### Socio-Religious Movements

### ◆ Social Reform

An era of social reform was inaugurated by Raja Rammohun Roy, who focused primarily on improving the status of women. He took a patient approach, and his arguments were grounded on the authority of ancient scripture; he preferred to leave social reform to the increasing common sense of people. According to Keshab Chandra, "Any social custom that challenges reason must be abolished immediately and, if needed, through legal action". His comprehensive plan called for the education of women and their gradual



emancipation from all forms of oppression, as well as the elimination of caste divisions, the banning of alcohol, the mass dissemination of knowledge through inexpensive newspapers, adult education through night schools, and the abolition of social evils. These were the general directions in which the social reform movement shifted. The distinctions between Raja Rammohun Roy's and Keshab Chandra's methods also indicated the point at which the Indian social reform movement split during the 1800s.

◆ *Outlawing the Practice of Sati*

Rammohun Roy was a prominent figure in the fight against the Sati system, the practice of burning a widow alongside her husband's body. He actively participated in the long-running agitation and produced pamphlets to demonstrate that the inhuman practice was not approved by Hindu scriptures. However, Ram Mohan neither supported nor approved of the Governor-General, Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck, when he chose to enact legislation outlawing the practice of sati in the midst of strong resistance. To any sudden legislative change, he preferred the systematic development of persuasive strategies.

◆ *Role of Keshab Chandra*

Keshab Chandra persuaded the government to approve the Native Marriage Act, also referred to as the Civil Marriage Act, in 1872, allowing marriages that were illegal under Hindu law. A key component of the Indian Renaissance was the extensive social reform that the Brahma Samaj initiated, spearheaded by Keshab Chandra Sen, who served as an inspiration and a leader. The Indian Reform Association was established by Keshab in 1870.

◆ *Approach of Prarthana Samaj*

Under the direction of Mahadev Govinda Ranade, the Prarthana Samaj, which was established in Bombay in 1867 as the Brahma Samaj's counterpart, pursued a more moderate approach to social reform. "We don't want to break with the past and cut off all ties to our society," Ranade stated. "We don't want to let go of the long-standing, established institutions." He did not consider himself to be "one of those who would abandon society because it tolerates what seems to them to be great evils". However, the concepts of social reform were neither exclusive to nor born out of the Brahma Samaj.

Many English-educated people who were not part of it had fully absorbed the liberal and logical spirit of the time and turned into ardent reformers of social injustices. They were greatly aided and encouraged by the small groups of



◆ *Role of Educated middle class*

Englishmen in India who had been eager to abolish some of the most horrifying and cruel social customs there, such as the Sati, which, as previously mentioned, was outlawed in 1829.

◆ *Outlawing inhuman practices*

The practice of killing a girl almost shortly after her birth was another terrible practice among some Hindus. Certain Rajput tribes in Varanasi, Gujarat, and Kutch were popular for practising it. However, the crime was so secretive that it was extremely hard to identify. The British authority's constant efforts did not bear fruit until the middle of the 1800s. Still, they were supported by an overall awakening of a rational spirit among the Indians through English education, and the crime rate steadily decreased in the second half of the 1800s. The British government worked hard to end the practice of throwing children into the Ganges, along with other cruel and less barbaric customs. Some aboriginal groups even sacrificed men as a form of sacrifice, but these practices were mostly stopped by the government, with assistance from the more progressive section of society.

◆ *Legalisation of Widow Remarriage*

In Calcutta and Bombay, widows were attempting to remarry as early as 1837. As the principal of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta and a profound scholar in Sanskrit, Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar led this agitation, and it was largely because of his efforts that the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act, which legalised such marriages, was passed in 1856. A sincere but fruitless attempt was also made by Bengali Indians educated in England to outlaw through legislation the custom of a Kulin Brahman marrying fifty, sixty, or even more wives, the majority of whom he never saw again after the marriage ceremonies.

### **Introduction of Modern Education**

◆ *Spread of Modern Education*

Three primary agencies facilitated the introduction of modern education in India. They were the progressive Indians, the British government, and the foreign Christian missionaries. Nonetheless, the main force behind the spread of modern education in India was the British. Tens of thousands of educated Indians with a working grasp of the modern world were produced by the thousands of schools and colleges, and it was founded throughout India. Even if Indian nationalism criticised the curricula for their restrictions and distortions, it is nevertheless true that Britain played a progressive role in introducing liberal and technical modern education in India despite its own demands.

♦ *Source of Indian Nationalism*

The political, administrative, and economic requirements of Britain in India served as the primary driving force behind the establishment of modern education in India. It was not a coincidence that significant steps towards the introduction of modern education in India were taken at the end of the first half of the 1800s, particularly under Lord Dalhousie's Governor-Generalship. Many British intellectuals asserted that modern education brought by the British to India was the source of Indian nationalism. They claimed that the Indian people's desire for national independence increased as a result of modern education, enabling them to learn about and internalise the libertarian ideas advanced by Western writers.

### **Introduction of Transportation System**

♦ *Development of Railway system*

The nineteenth century India witnessed the development of a modern transportation system in India. During the pre-British period, India had weak transportation facilities because modern industries, which could have produced modern modes of travel, were nonexistent. The East India Company was under pressure to build roads and railways in India in order to serve the interests of the British industrial sector. Lord Dalhousie vehemently outlined the development of the railway in India in his well-known 'Minute' on Railways. The construction and expansion of motor buses and railways in India also significantly aided the country. The new economic forces used railways to undermine the economic foundation of traditional Indian society. They aided in the infiltration of modern society in India and shattering the village's economic isolation. They facilitated the unification of India's economy and connected it to the global marketplace. India's tangible national economy, was shaped in part by its railway system.

### **2.1.2. Growth of Nationalism in India**

The idea of Indian nationalism did not exist when British rule was established in India. Bengal saw the rise of nationalism before other regions of India.

Let us explore the factors that led to the growth of nationalism in India.

#### **2.1.2.1. The Rediscovery of India's Past**

One of the main contributing elements to the rise of nationalism is the increasing awareness of the glory and greatness of ancient India. James S. Mill, a Scottish



◆ *Civilising Mission in India*

philosopher and historian, openly expressed the belief that the Hindus had never existed in the deplorable state that the Englishmen discovered in the eighteenth century. His work *The History of British India* was published in 1818, and he tried to explain the civilising mission of the British in India.

◆ *Glory of ancient India*

*The History of the Hindu Kings*, penned in 1808 by Mrityunjay Bhattacharya, a pandit at Fort William College in Calcutta, demonstrates the extremely limited understanding that the Indians themselves had of their own historical background. The general public was not yet aware of or impressed by the works of early European scholars of the East, such as Prinsep, Bohtlingk, and William Jones. However, the archaeological research and excavations that began in 1861 under Alexander Cunningham's direct supervision, as well as the more widely read writings of authors like Max Muller, Wilson, Fergusson, Rajendra Lal Mitra, and others, depicted a vivid picture of ancient India's glory and greatness, elevating it to the status of Greece or Rome for educated Indians. This gave Indian youth a renewed sense of pride in their rich historical legacy and the prominent role they once held in world history. It unavoidably instilled a sense of self-confidence in them and presented them with a promising picture of their future.

◆ *Indian ancestors*

European scholars believed that Hindu ancestors were part of the same group of humanity from which all ancient European nations descended. The Hindus' sacred literature, Vedas and Upanishad, were the world's oldest literary works that contained the most profound philosophical speculations ever conceived by the human mind. Buddhism, which originated in India, played a significant role in the civilisation of a substantial portion of the world's population.

◆ *Rich cultural Legacy of India*

Many Indians had descended to such depths that they no longer believed in their ability to rule themselves. The notion that Indians had never been able to rule themselves in the past that Muslims and Hindus had always fought one another, that Indians were destined to be ruled by foreigners, and that their social life and religion were degraded and uncivilised, making them unfit for democracy or even self-government, was also persistently advanced by many British officials and writers of the period. By opposing this notion, a large number of nationalist leaders attempted to instil a sense of self-worth and dignity in the general population. With pride, they cited India's rich cultural legacy and referred the detractors to the political accomplishments of emperors such as Akbar, Ashoka, and Chandragupta Vikramaditya.

♦ *Blind celebration of India's Past*

Indian and European scholars have contributed significantly to the understanding of India's past. However, some nationalists have glorified its past while disregarding its limitations. This blind focus on ancient India's legacy led to Hindu communal attitudes and Muslim countertrends drawing inspiration from Arab and Turkish history. Many Indians overlooked the cultural antiquation of their fellow citizens, causing a fake sense of pride and smugness. This led to a fight against social and cultural degradation, causing many Indians to reject new ideas and tendencies from other cultures. The fight against cultural degradation was crucial for promoting a more inclusive and respectful society.

### 2.1.2.2 Influence of Western Culture

♦ *Influence of Western culture on Bengal*

The influence of Western culture led to the development of the idea of nationalism in India. An early strong tide of Western culture in Bengal took away a portion of Bengali youth who trained in English. They developed an extreme admiration for all things in English and became highly anglicised. They openly expressed their contempt for everything Indian and embraced Western beliefs, behaviours, attire, manners, and usages. According to Bhudeb Mukherji, "They thought in English, communicated in English, and, as put it so delightfully, possibly even dreamed in English". They treated practically anything Indian with a sardonic scorn. The problems increased as English became more widely taught, and eventually, a small segment of the Indian community identified as Westernised individuals.

♦ *Influence from revolution*

The French Revolution and the American War of Independence in the 18th century deeply influenced English-educated Indians. The struggles for freedom that took place throughout various parts of Europe in 1830 and 1848, particularly the Irish fight for independence from slavery and the Indians' release from Greece and Italy, also left a lasting impression. These factors sparked strong emotions in the Indian people and sparked similar feelings of nationalism.

### 2.1.2.3. Growth of Modern Indian Intelligentsia

During this period, India saw the rise of an educated intelligentsia. Raja Rammohan Roy and his associates were the first intelligentsia to study and absorb the democratic and rationalist concepts, theories, and spirit of Western culture. In the initial decades of the 1800s, there were a few educated Indians. A significant class of educated native Indians did not emerge until the latter half of the 1800s, when the British,





◆ *Rise of modern  
Intelligentsia*

with the support of missionary organisations and educated Indians, established an increasing number of schools and colleges. As a result, a sizable modern intelligentsia emerged. They were the forerunners, coordinators, and leaders of every national political movement. They introduced the concept of nationalism and freedom to ever-larger segments of the Indian population through their work in education and propaganda, which required tremendous self-sacrifice and suffering. The goal was to instil a sense of nationalism and democracy through literatures and cultures of the provinces. Great scientists, poets, historians, sociologists, writers, philosophers, and economists were among their progeny.

#### 2.1.2.4. Role of Literature

◆ *Influence of  
French Revolution*

With its slogan of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, the French Revolution of 1789 aroused enormous democratic sentiments and released the forces of modern nationalism, resulting in new attitudes of mind, manners, and morals appearing throughout Europe. Francis Bacon, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Adam Smith, and Bentham were among the intellectuals who embodied the new trend. Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Charles Dickens were among the writers who did the same. The new ideas that emerged from the French, Industrial, and Intellectual revolutions of the 18th century had a profound effect on the conceptions of administration.

◆ *Role of English  
Language*

The English language and literature served as a valuable means of communication for educated Indians across the country, enabling them to share their opinions on various social, political, and scientific issues at a national level. Proficiency in English opened new opportunities to study literature in the language, as well as social libertarianism, natural science, and rationalist philosophy. The rationalist philosophy aimed to liberate the mind from dark superstition, fatalism, pessimism, and otherworldliness, while the social libertarian philosophy aimed to achieve individual and national freedom.

◆ *Influence of  
Social Theories*

The English translations also helped to study the philosophical views of Democritus, Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Descartes, Leibnitz, Immanuel Kant, Auguste Comte, Nietzsche, Hegel, Max Stirner, Benedetto Croce, Oswald Spengler, and Karl Marx. In addition, the English-educated Indians were able to absorb the social theories of Auguste Comte, Saint-Simon, socialist Marx and

Engels, anarchist Bakunin, syndicalist Proudhon, and other influential figures from the eighteenth-century including Machiavelli, Diderot, Holbach, Helvetius, Voltaire, and others.

### 2.1.2.5. Role of Press

#### ◆ Fourth Estate

The printing press played a crucial role in fostering a new spirit within Indian society, influencing a wide segment of the population. The emergence of the modern newspaper, aptly called the 'Fourth Estate,' is a prime example of this impact. Journalism was introduced to India by European adventurers, and the country's first publications, all in English, were produced by Englishmen. J. A. Hickey founded the first weekly, the *Bengal Gazette*, in 1780 and characterised it as "a weekly political and commercial paper open to all parties, but influenced by none."

#### ◆ First Newspapers of India

The *Madras Courier*, which began publishing in 1785, was the first newspaper in Madras. In Bombay, the first newspaper was *The Bombay Herald*, which started in 1789. Both newspapers faced pre-censorship, and their editors occasionally provoked the ire of colonial authorities. It is important to note that these early newspapers primarily targeted the English-speaking colonial community and reflected their perspectives and concerns.

#### ◆ Sambad-Kaumudi' and Mirat-Ul-Akbar

Raja Rammohan Roy launched *Sambad-Kaumudi* in Bengali in 1821 and *Mirat-Ul-Akbar* in Persian in 1822, marking the first Indian publications to adopt a nationalist and progressive democratic stance. These publications primarily served as platforms for advocating social change and provided critical analyses of philosophical and religious issues.

#### ◆ The Amrita Bazar Patrika

The Gujarati newspaper *Bombay Samachar* was founded in 1822 and continues to be published today. In Delhi in 1837 and 1838, a number of Urdu publications were published. During this period, the nationalist press also expanded. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was founded in 1868 by Sisir Kumar Ghosh and his associates in Bengal as an Anglo-Bengali weekly. It completely shifted into an English weekly in order to get its way around the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. In 1891, it became an English daily. One of the most popular nationalist journals, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, promoted strong nationalist ideas. The paper faced suppression because of its harsh criticism of government policies.



## 2.1.3. Anti-Indian Policy of the British

### 2.1.3.1. Policy Towards Native States

#### ◆ Policy of annexation

The British followed the policy of annexation towards the native States of India. Until 1857, the British sought to annex the Indian states and turn the whole country into a British colony under the direct rule of the East India Company. After the revolt of 1857, Britain followed a new strategy to make the rulers of native states ardent supporters of British rule. However, after the 1857 revolt, this goal was abandoned in favour of keeping unannexed states. Britain gave up the policy of annexation of native states after 1857 in order to protect her supremacy.

### 2.1.3.2. Policy Towards Agrarian Population

#### ◆ Destitution of peasants and poverty

After the revolt of 1857, the growing impoverishment of the peasants under British rule gave rise to discontent. The rising burden of land revenue and rents severely impacted the peasant population. By 1870, Indian artisans and craftsmen were severely crippled, placing enormous pressure on agriculture. The agricultural downturn of that year further exacerbated the situation, causing a significant rise in peasant debt and severely impacting their livelihoods. Between 1867 and 1880, there were several devastating famines. The 1877 famine was a particularly severe one, impacting "200,000 square miles and a population of thirty-six million" in Bombay, Madras, and other regions of the subcontinent.

#### ◆ Peasant Riots

One of the darkest periods in the history of the British in India was the atrocities perpetrated by the indigo planters in Bengal. Cultivators were forced to sow indigo against their will. Cultivators who refused to comply were burned in their homes, severely beaten, tortured, and imprisoned in the factories' dark dungeons for months. It was also frequently claimed that their women's modesty was annoyed. The peasantry's discontent with the economic hardship led to several peasant riots, the most significant of which was the Deccan Peasant Rising of 1875. The Deccan Riots Commission was tasked with looking into the entire agrarian crisis in the same year that the government realised how serious the issue was. Due to the frequent devastation caused by famines, the Famine Commission of 1878 was also established.

### 2.1.3.3. Racial Arrogance

The British attitudes of racial superiority in interactions with Indians played a significant, albeit secondary, role in the

♦ *Racial Prejudice*

development of nationalist sentiments in India. Indians were publicly humiliated by many Englishmen, who occasionally even attacked them. Indian newspapers frequently carried stories about Englishmen who had killed an Indian but got away “very lightly,” often paying just a fine. This situation gave a formidable tool of power to a greedy and arrogant Englishman. All Indians, regardless of caste, religion, province, or status, were stigmatised with a label of inferiority due to racial arrogance. They were barred from clubs that catered only to Europeans and frequently denied the opportunity to travel in the same train compartment as European passengers.

♦ *Reactionary Regime*

#### 2.1.3.4. Policy of Reaction by Lord Lytton

In 1876, Lord Lytton came to India as Governor General, and thus, the reactionary regime of Lord Lytton began. To appease British textile manufacturers, most import duties on British textile imports dropped during Lord Lytton’s viceroyalty (1876–1880). Indians interpreted this as evidence that the British intended to destroy India’s developing textile sector. It sparked a public protest and considerable violence. The Indian Treasury was forced to bear the expenses of the Second War against Afghanistan.

♦ *Anti-popular policy of Lytton*

Lord Lytton introduced the Arms Act of 1878, which disarmed Indian people. The Act is an attempt to emasculate the country as a whole. The Vernacular Press Act of 1878, which restricted the freedom of the Indian Press, was passed during Lord Lytton’s viceroyalty. The politically aware Indians saw the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 as a means to suppress the growing nationalist sentiment towards the foreign government. The ever-increasing anger among the people was fuelled by Lord Lytton’s anti-popular policies, which exacerbated their unhappiness. This is made abundantly clear in Wedderburn’s biography of Hume. According to Wedderburn, “Mr Hume and his Indian advisers were inspired to intervene only in due course, as the ill-starred measures of reaction, coupled with Russian methods of Police repression, brought India under Lord Lytton within measurable distance of a revolutionary outbreak.”

#### 2.1.3.5. Ilbert Bill Controversy

Most British, both official and unofficial, had an arrogant attitude towards Indians because they believed that they belonged to the dominating white race. The Ilbert Bill controversy centred on the administration of the judicial

◆ *Criminal  
Procedure Code*

system during Lord Ripon's viceroyalty. In 1857, Indian magistrates in Presidency towns were considered eligible to preside over Europeans as Justices of the Peace and to exercise judicial authority over them. Trials involving European convicts carrying a punishment of at least one thousand rupees in fines or three months in jail must be presided over by a European magistrate or judge. Cases involving European prisoners carrying a minimum fine of one thousand rupees or a maximum term of three months in prison must be ruled over by a European magistrate or judge. However, this jurisdiction was eliminated by the Criminal Procedure Code of 1872.

◆ *Rejection of  
Ilbert Bill*

During the final revisions of the Criminal Procedure Code in 1881–1882, Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore announced his plan to bring up the question of Indian magistrates' power to try Europeans. The majority of provincial governments accepted the recommendation. The Secretary of State was consulted on the topic and approved it. Following it, Sir Courtney Ilbert, the Law Member, drafted and presented a bill that included the proposal. The Ilbert Bill aimed to eliminate a procedural issue that discriminated against Indian magistrates. However, the prosecution of a white man by an Indian magistrate was viewed as an unacceptable act of degradation by the European population, which expressed outrage at this assumption of racial equality. The almost relentless opposition of the European community led to the rejection of the Bill. The Indians felt betrayed by the impartiality of the British administration.

## Summarised Overview

The British rule in India had significant consequences, including the extinction of native rulers and the introduction of a unified system of law. Lord Dalhousie used the policy of Doctrine of Lapse to carry out his annexation plans. Modern political ideas like nationalism, nationality, patriotism, and political rights gained prominence due to the influence of Western culture. The British introduced new social economies, political structures, and administrative apparatuses, leading to the creation of new social classes. The new system created landlordism in some regions and individual peasant proprietorship in others. The commercialisation of agriculture, degradation of traditional Indian villages, growth of famine, rural indebtedness, serfdom, decline of handicrafts, and decline of Indian industries had significant impacts. Bengal saw the rise of nationalism before other regions. Factors contributing to this growth of nationalism included the rediscovery of



India's past, the influence of Western culture, the development of modern educated intelligentsia, and the impact of the press and literature. The British followed anti-India policies, such as the Arms Act of 1878 and the Vernacular Press Act of 1878.

## Assignments

1. Discuss the major impact of British rule in India.
2. Analyse the rise of anti-British sentiments in India
3. Explain how India was exploited economically by the British.
4. Discuss the examples of the British's anti-Indian attitude.
5. Discuss the administrative policies introduced by the British during its early phase.

## Suggested Reading

1. Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, 1998.
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SGOU



## Emergence of Indian National Congress

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ explain the origin of the Indian National Congress
- ◆ evaluate the early political organisations and ideologies in India
- ◆ identify the objectives and demands of the Indian National Congress

### Background

Naturally, many more streams joined the flowing torrent of the Indian freedom movement. In this unit, we discuss one such stream. The Indian National Congress was founded around the close of 1885, bringing a new era in Indian political history. It entirely took over India's political life for over 20 years, giving rise to the ideals of administrative and constitutional reforms that served as the main pillars of the country's political struggle.

It is hard to imagine a time or place where one political institution has contributed so significantly to the nation's freedom from foreign rule for over sixty years. The history of the Indian freedom movement is not limited to the history of the Indian National Congress because other organisations and forces were also working towards the same goal both before and after. However, the Congress has to be at the centre of any description of India's arduous liberation struggle. It is also important to keep in mind the political ideologies and institutions that have evolved into the Indian National Congress, which was not so much their culmination as their outcome.

### Keywords

Moderates, Safety Valve, Lightning Conductor, Utilitarian, Drain of wealth, Indian National Congress



## Discussion

### 2.2.1. Early Political Associations

#### ◆ *First Political Association*

The Indian National Congress, established in December 1885, was the first pan-Indian organisation representing the Indian national movement. But it had a number of forerunners. The Landholders' Society, an association of landlords from Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, was the first political association in modern India. It was established in 1837 with the intention of advancing the landlord's interests.

#### ◆ *British Indian Association*

Another important political association established in 1843 was the Bengal British Indian Society, with the aim of safeguarding and advancing the interests of the general population. In 1851, The Landholders' Society and the Bengal British Indian Society united and came to be known as the British Indian Association. Likewise, the Bombay Association and the Madras Native Association were founded in 1852. Similar, if less well-known, groups and associations were formed in different cities and regions of the country, such as the Sayyid Ahmad Khan-founded Scientific Society. Wealthy and aristocratic individuals dominated all of these groups, which had a provincial or local character.

#### ◆ *Submitting Petitions*

These associations filed lengthy petitions outlining Indian aspirations to the British Parliament and fought for reform, Indian involvement in the administration, and reform of the administrative system. The educated Indians grew increasingly critical of British policies in India as they learned more about the nature of British rule and its effects on the Indians. Eventually, the unhappiness manifested itself in political action. The Indians, who were politically aware, were no longer pleased with their present interactions.

#### ◆ *Grand Old Man of India*

Dadabhai Naoroji founded the East India Association in London in 1866 with the goal of bringing attention to the Indian question and motivating British officials to initiate further welfare measures. Subsequently, he established several branches of the Association in well-known Indian cities. Dadabhai spent his whole life working for the struggle for freedom and earned the title "Grand Old Man of India." He was also considered as the first Indian economist in India. In his writings, he demonstrated that the British exploitation of India and the looting of its resources was the fundamental cause of the country's poverty. Dadabhai became president

of the Indian National Congress thrice.

◆ *Poona Sarvajanik Sabha*

The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was established in the 1870s by Justice Ranade. The Bombay Presidency Association was founded in 1885, and the Madras Mahajan Sabha in 1881. The primary focus of these organisations was to critique significant administrative and legislative decisions of the British government. Justice Ranade guided the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha in publishing a quarterly publication. This publication evolved into the new India's intelligentsia, especially when it came to economic matters.

◆ *Surendranath Banerjea*

The British India Association's conservative and pro-landlord attitudes had steadily disturbed Bengal's younger nationalists. They wanted to be active participants in Indian political issues that the public is more broadly concerned with. They found a gifted writer and orator in Surendranath Banerjee, whom they chose as their leader. As he was an independent-minded Indian in the ranks of the Indian Civil Service; he was unfairly removed from the service. His public breakthrough came in 1875 when he addressed students in Calcutta on national issues.

◆ *The Indian Association of Calcutta*

The Indian Association of Calcutta was the most significant nationalist organisation prior to the Congress. It was established in July 1876 by the younger nationalists of Bengal under the leadership of Surendranath and Anandamohan Bose. The Indian Association aims to unify the Indians around a shared political agenda and create a strong national public opinion on political issues. It aimed to attract thousands of people by offering low-cost membership for the lower classes. Raising the age limit for the Civil Service Examination and reforming the norms were the first significant issues it raised. In an attempt to establish an agreement among Indians on this matter, Surendranath Banerjee travelled throughout the country during 1877-1878.

Additionally, the Indian Association advocated for the protection of tenants from the oppression of zamindars and ran campaigns against the Arms Act and the Vernacular Press Act. It coordinated mass protests involving thousands of peasants between 1883 and 1885 in an effort to modify the Rent Bill in favour of the tenants. It also campaigned for improved working conditions for the labourers on the tea plantations owned by the English, where conditions similar to slavery predominated. The Indian Association primarily addressed local issues, and its membership was limited to



◆ *Campaigns of Indian Association*

a single city or province. It had not even been possible for the Indian Association to become an all-Indian organisation. This was the right moment for nationalists to band together politically against the common enemy.

◆ *Merging with the Congress*

In December 1883, the Indian Association organised an all-India National Conference in Calcutta. Several dignitaries from outside Bengal attended this conference. It embraced a platform that was strikingly similar to that of the Indian National Congress, with which it merged in 1886. It was unable, therefore, to establish itself as a nationwide organisation that represented political leaders and workers.

### 2.2.2. Origin of the Indian National Congress

◆ *History of Indian National Congress*

It is important to note that the initial name of the Indian National Congress that A.O. Hume suggested was the "Conference of the Indian National Union". Tracing the origins of the Indian National Congress as an independent organisation is, nevertheless, a challenging task. Patabhi Sitaramayya outlined the issue of its origin in his work '*History of the Indian National Congress*'. He wrote, "It is shrouded in mystery who originated the idea of an All-India Congress. We concluded that the idea was in the air, that the need for such an organisation was being felt, that Allan Octavian Hume took the Initiative".

#### 2.2.2.1. Foundation of Indian National Congress

◆ *A.O. Hume*

A retired English Civil Servant, A.O. Hume, deserves credit for providing the idea of a concrete and final shape for the Indian National Congress. He made contact with well-known Indian politicians and, with their help, held an inaugural meeting of the Indian National Congress in Bombay in December 1885. W.C. Bonnerjee presided over the session, and 72 delegates attended. Nearly all of the notable figures of Indian nationalism were present.

◆ *Second Session*

Many Bengali leaders, including Surendranath Banerjee, were preoccupied with the Second All-India National Conference in Calcutta and missed the first session of the National Congress. They joined with the Indian National Congress in 1886, whose second session was presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji and held in Calcutta in December 1886. Various local associations and organisations elected 436 delegates. From then onwards, the December meeting of the National Congress was held annually in a different region of

the nation with thousands of delegates.

### 2.2.3.Theories on the Foundation of Indian National Congress

#### 2.2.3.1. Safety Valve Theory

William Wedderburn's biography of Hume (1913) served as the source of the theory. Wedderburn stated that A.O. Hume discovered classified file records revealing a plot to use force to oust the British and growing dissatisfaction among the lower classes. With this intention, Vasudeo Balwant Phadke, a clerk in the Commissariat Department, organised a group of Ramosi peasants and initiated an armed rebellion in Maharashtra as early as 1879. This situation alarmed Hume and other British officials, who feared that educated Indians could mobilise the masses and mount a significant uprising against British rule. Hume recognised that widespread dissatisfaction with British rule was on the brink of igniting a revolution. After a confusing meeting with Lord Dufferin, he decided to establish an organisation of educated Indians. His goal was to avert a large-scale uprising by creating a means of communication between the rulers and the ruled, thus serving as a safety valve to manage discontent. According to Hume, "A safety-valve for the escape of great and growing forces, generated by our action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety-valve could possibly be devised than our Congress movement".

♦ *Popular discontent with the British administration*

#### 2.2.3.2. Conspiracy Theory

The Marxist historians used the Safety Valve Theory to create a conspiracy theory in order to explain the real reason behind the origin of the Indian National Congress. According to R.P. Dutt, the Indian bourgeois leaders were involved in the conspiracy that gave rise to the Congress, which was intended to prevent a popular revolt in India. The conspiracy theory and safety valve theory were disproved in the 1950s. Firstly, there is no record of those seven volumes of classified reports which A.O. Hume discovered in any Indian or London archives. Historians doubt that such a large number of classified reports given the design of the British information system in the 1870s. Besides Wedderburn's biography of Hume, there are no other references to these reports. Wedderburn also noted that these reports were allegedly provided to Hume by religious leaders rather than from official sources. The

♦ *Conspiracy to Prevent Popular Revolt*



confusion was then resolved when Lord Dufferin's private documents were made public in the late 1950s, shattering the false belief that he was funding either Hume or Congress. He did not take Hume seriously after seeing him in Shimla in May 1885, and he went on to give the governor of Bombay clear instructions to be suspicious of the delegates that were scheduled to assemble there.

### 2.2.3.3. Lightning Conductor Theory

Another prominent member of the early Congress, Gokhale, stated in 1913 that any attempt by Indians to organise an all-India organisation would be met with the hostile attention of the government right away. "If the founder of the Congress had not been a great Englishman", he stated, "the authorities would have at once found some way or the other to suppress the movement". Therefore, the Congress leaders sought to employ Hume as a lightning conductor, "if Hume and other English liberals hoped to use Congress as a safety-valve."

♦ *Hume as a lightning conductor*

### 2.2.4. Goals of Indian National Congress

The objectives of the Indian National Congress were declared as follows:

1. To foster cordial relationships between nationalist political activists across the nation;
2. To develop and strengthen the sense of national unity regardless of caste, religion, or political affiliation;
3. To formulate popular demands and present them to the government; and,
4. To organise and train the general population.

♦ *Aims of Indian National Congress*

### 2.2.5. Demands of Indian National Congress

The Indian National Congress enacted resolutions emphasising demands made by a national organisation for the first time, including the dissolution of the India Council, holding simultaneous exams for the Indian Civil Services (I.C.S.) and increasing the age limit for I.C.S. candidates, allowing elected members to serve on Legislative Councils, and establishing councils in the Punjab, Oudh, and North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.) Therefore, the first Congress's demands, which were initiated and spearheaded by liberal politicians, were modest and limited to instituting administrative reform and introducing the electoral principle in legislatures.

♦ *Administrative demands*

### 2.2.6. Moderate Phase(1885-1905)

#### ♦ Influence of Utilitarian Views

From 1885 to 1905, for the first twenty years, 'moderate politics' was the term used to describe Congress politics in India. The Indian National Congress held annual conferences for three days to deliberate, approve resolutions, and disperse. The majority of its members were prosperous professionals from the upper class, lacking the time and resources to pursue full-time politics. Their goals and agitation strategies were consistent. The moderates were deeply influenced by the utilitarian views of Edmund Burke, John Stuart Mill, and John Morley.

#### ♦ Moderate leaders

The leaders of the Indian national movement during its initial phase were members of the liberal intelligentsia, who controlled the Indian National Congress from 1885 to 1905. Among them, prominent leaders were Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, Apte, Agarkar, Telang, Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, D. E. Wachha, Malabari, and Chandavarkar from Bombay; P. R. Naidu, Subramannya Aiyer, Ananda Charlu, and Virraghavachariar from Madras; and Keshav Pillai, Pandit Malaviya, and Pandit Dhar.

#### 2.2.6.1.Methods of Moderates

#### ♦ Pray, Petition and Protest

The Moderates' political strategies can be summarised as a gradual and steady approach to political progress within the framework of the legal system. They believed that by mobilising public opinion and raising awareness through meetings, speeches, resolutions, and petitions, the government would eventually concede to their demands. Consequently, their political efforts were characterised by a dual approach. The first goal is to develop a strong public opinion in India in order to educate and unify the general population on political issues, as well as to awaken their political consciousness and sense of nationalism. In essence, this objective was the focus of all of the National Congress's resolutions and petitions. Second, to convince the British government to implement reforms in accordance with the guidelines made by the nationalists. Thus, the moderate nationalists attempted to educate Indian people and create public opinion.

#### 2.2.6.2 Administrative Reforms

The Indianisation of the upper layers of administrative services was the most significant administrative change that the Indians demanded. Moral, political, and economic



♦ *European Monopoly on Higher Services*

reasons drove this demand. The European monopoly on higher services was adverse to the economy for two reasons: (a) Europeans received very high salaries, making the administration costly, while similarly qualified Indians could be employed at lower wages, and (b) Europeans sent a substantial portion of their salaries and pensions back to their home countries, exacerbating India's economic challenges. Politically, nationalists argued that the Indianisation of these services would make the administration more attuned to Indian interests.

♦ *Demands for Welfare*

The nationalists insisted that the executive and judicial branches be kept apart. In response to the government's official policy of disarming the population as a whole, they urged it to have faith in the people and allow them the freedom to keep and carry arms so they could protect their nation and themselves in times of need. They encouraged the government to initiate and expand state-sponsored welfare programmes. They also desired for more technical and higher education facilities for Indians.

♦ *Demands for agricultural developments*

To free the peasants from the clutches of the moneylenders, they raised the need for the establishment of agricultural banks. In order to advance agriculture, they demanded the government launch a massive irrigation scheme. They called for the expansion of healthcare and medical facilities as well as making the police force more reliable, effective, and popular. The moderates also raised their voices in support of Indian labourers who were forced to flee their homeland in search of work, travelling to places like British Guiana, South Africa, Malaya, Mauritius, and the West Indies. These people experienced extreme oppression and racial discrimination in foreign countries.

## 1. Constitutional Reforms

♦ *Modest Demands of Moderates*

The moderates demanded greater involvement in national governance, but they did not demand that their objectives be achieved immediately. They made very modest demands instantaneously. Their goal was to achieve freedom gradually. They also exercised tremendous prudence in case the government decided to suppress their actions. Between 1885 and 1892, they called for the expansion and reform of Legislative Councils. They demanded that elected representatives be allowed to join the councils as members.

The Indian Councils Act of 1892, which expanded



◆ *'No Taxation' without Representation*

membership in the Provincial Councils and the Imperial Legislative Council, was passed by the British Government as a result of their agitation. The councils were allowed to discuss the annual budgets, even though Indians were not allowed to vote for council members. The Act of 1892 was utterly rejected by the moderates, who called it a 'hoax'. They asked for additional power and increased representation of Indians in the councils. They argued for Indian sovereignty over the public privy purse and raised the slogan "No Taxation Without Representation," which had already been adopted as the American motto during the War of Independence.

◆ *Demands for Swarajya*

In the 20th century, nationalist leaders promoted the concept of *swarajya*, or self-government, within the British Empire, drawing inspiration from independent colonies like Canada and Australia. In 1905, Gokhale and Dadabhai Naoroji emphasised this demand on the Congress platform.

## 2. Economic Reforms

◆ *Demand for establishing modern industries*

Early nationalists criticised India's growing economic regression and poverty, as well as the country's inability to prosper in modern industry and agriculture. They discovered that British colonial policy was the true cause of these problems. Consequently, Dadabhai Naoroji stated in 1881 that the British administration was "utterly, though gradually, destroying the country" and that it was "an everlasting, increasing, and every day increasing foreign invasion." The main solution the nationalists proposed to end India's poverty was the quick establishment of modern industries. They held the British responsible for the devastation of India's indigenous industries. The moderates wanted direct government assistance and tariff protection to support modern industry. Additionally, they campaigned for better working conditions for plantation labourers.

◆ *Drain of Wealth*

The early nationalists demanded that the wealth being drained from India and sent to England be suspended. They sustained their support for a decrease in land revenue in an effort to lessen the peasant's tax burden. They urged the removal of the salt tax and a reduction in land revenue, citing excessive taxes as a contributing factor to India's poverty. They called for a decrease in India's large military expenditures. Over time, a growing number of nationalists concluded that the country's economic exploitation,



poverty, and continued economic backwardness caused by imperialism outweighed some of the advantages of foreign rule.

### 2.2.7. Attitude of the British Government

The British authorities were hostile to the growing nationalist movement. From Dufferin onwards, nationalist leaders were referred to by British officials as “violent villains,” “seditious brahmins,” and “disloyal babus.” At first, this hostility was not expressed in public, probably because of the belief that Hume’s advice would protect the national movement and the National Congress from British rule. The Viceroy Lord Dufferin even extended an invitation to the leaders of the Indian National Congress to a Garden Party in December 1886. However, it became clear that the National Congress would eventually turn into an instrument in the hands of the British government and that Indian nationalism was rapidly centring on it. At this point, British officials publicly criticised and condemned nationalist leaders.

#### ◆ *Garden Party*

During a public speech in 1887, Lord Dufferin disregarded the National Congress, accusing it of representing a “microscopic minority of the population of India.” In 1897, the government passed Sections 124(A) and 153(A) to oppose Congress’ activities. Secret Journalistic Committees were founded in 1898 to suppress freedom of the press. In 1900, Lord Curzon wrote to the Secretary of State: “The Congress is tottering to its fall, and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it in a peaceful demise.”

#### ◆ *Microscopic Minority*

### 2.2.8. Criticism

Some critics argue that the Indian National Congress and the nationalist movement were not particularly successful in their early years. They point out that the government implemented very few of the reforms that the nationalists advocated. Additionally, critics highlight that the early nationalist movement lacked widespread support. However, critics who label the early national movement as a failure are not entirely accurate. It successfully triggered a broad national awakening and made the people understand their collective identity as part of India. It taught political skills, promoted nationalism and democracy, spread modern perspectives, and highlighted the negative impacts of British rule on the people.

#### ◆ *Lack of support*

Above all, the Indian National Congress helped Indians

◆ *Understanding  
the real nature of  
the British*

understand the real nature and economic substance of British imperialism, that is, how India became a supplier of raw materials, a market for British products, and a place where British capital could be invested. It developed a shared political and economic vision around which the Indian population could mobilise and engage in political conflict. It proved to be a fact that the interests of the Indian people must come first in ruling India. It caused nationalism to become a major concern in Indian society. While its shortcomings would be addressed by subsequent generations, the achievements of the early nationalist movement laid the groundwork for a more robust national movement in the future.

## Summarised Overview

Before the Indian National Congress was established, several political organisations existed in India, including the Sarvajanik Sabha, the Indian Association, and the Bombay Association. These organisations filed petitions outlining Indian aspirations to the British Parliament and fought for reform of Indian administration. A retired English Civil Servant, A.O. Hume, provided the idea for the Indian National Congress. The inaugural meeting of the Congress was held in Bombay in December 1885, with 72 delegates attending. The Congress's main goals included fostering cordial relationships between nationalist activists, strengthening national unity, formulating popular demands, and organising and training the general population.

The Congress demanded the dissolution of the India Council, simultaneous exams for the I.C.S., increasing the age limit for candidates, allowing elected members to serve on legislative councils, and establishing councils in Punjab, Oudh, and N.W.F.P. Moderate politics was the term used to describe Congress politics from 1885 to 1905. The moderates demanded greater involvement in national governance but did not demand immediate achievement. Early nationalists criticised India's increasing poverty, economic backwardness, and failure of modern industry and agriculture, arguing that the real cause was British colonial policy. The British authorities were hostile to the Indian National Congress and nationalist movement, with Lord Dufferin accusing it of representing a "microscopic minority of the population of India."

## Assignments

1. Discuss various theories associated with the foundation of Indian National Congress
2. Discuss the achievements and failures of the Moderates.
3. Discuss why Dadabhai Naoroji stated the British administration in India was “an everlasting, increasing, and every day increasing foreign invasion. Give examples.
4. Explain the role of Dadabhai Naoroji in the Indian National Congress.
5. Critically analyse the methods of the Indian National Congress and the activities that helped Indians understand the real nature of the British.

## Suggested Reading

1. Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, 1998.
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SGOU



## Rise of Extremism

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ explain the concept of extremism
- ◆ assess the various factors that led to the emergence of extremism in India
- ◆ evaluate the strategy of Swadeshi movements and its spread throughout India

### Background

The two wings of the national movement in India were moderates and extremists or the right and left wings. Regarding the two wings of the national movement, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak stated in a speech in Calcutta on January 2, 1907: "The two new words that have recently come into existence with regard to our politics are Moderates and Extremists." These words will change over time because they have a particular relationship to time. Just as today's moderates were once extremists and today's extremists will become moderates of tomorrow. For example, both Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendranath Bannerji were considered extremists when the Indian National Congress was formed, but by 1907, they had been categorised as moderates. We learned about the methods and demands of moderates in the previous unit. In this, we will discuss the rise of extremist trends in India. By the end of the nineteenth century, within the National Congress, a group of opposition emerged that came to be known as the "Extremists". The moderates were criticised for their policy mendicancy towards the British. The three key figures, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab, led the development of extremist trends in India.

### Keywords

Renaissance, Militant Nationalism, *Samiti*, *Swadeshi*, Partition, Extremist, Nationalism



## Discussion

### 2.3.1. Causes for the Rise of Extremism

#### 2.3.1.1. Impact of Renaissance

##### ◆ *Glorification of Mother India*

The Renaissance, a social, political, and religious awakening of the 19th century, is largely responsible for the growth of extremism in the Indian political scenario. During this period, 'Mother India', or 'Bharatmata' as India came to be known, was glorified. It is important to acknowledge the remarkable impact of the teachings and contributions of Neo-Hinduism, which were initiated by Pandit Shashdhar Tarka Ghuramani and modified by Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa and his pupil Swami Vivekananda. The Indians were instructed to feel elevated for being the descendants of one of the world's oldest cultures, which was still thriving and even capable of imparting the greatest spiritual and universal lessons to the materialism-dominated Western world. Ultimately, this undermined the mindset that led people to express their opinions and abandon petitioning or political begging. These entities and individuals set the stage for intense nationalism to sprout into extremism or radical nationalism, as it is known.

##### ◆ *Economic reasons*

#### 2.3.1.2. Worsening Economic Condition of India

The worsening of India's economic situation in 1835 was another element contributing to the emergence of extremist ideology. However, it got much worse after 1800. India had competent leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, M. G. Ranade, G. K. Gokhale, Dinshaw Edulji Wacha, R. N. Mudholkar, and B. G. Tilak thoroughly examined the economic situation of India and brought it to the government's notice. By means of their writings and speeches, they captured the public's attention. They implored the Indian government to govern with integrity while considering the best ways to improve the rapidly declining economic situation facing the nation.

#### 2.3.1.3. Dissatisfaction With Moderate Politics

Extremist reactions were fueled by dissatisfaction with moderate political leaders, who led to an undemocratic constitution in the Congress. Despite Tilak's attempts, a new Constitution was never fully implemented until 1899. A growing dissatisfaction with moderate political leaders undoubtedly sparked extremist reactions. Under moderate

◆ *Critiques of Moderates*

leadership, Congress operated under an undemocratic constitution. Even though Tilak made several attempts, a new constitution was never really tried before it was prepared and ratified in 1899.

#### 2.3.1.4. Growth of Poverty

The growing poverty rate is acknowledged by everyone as the primary disadvantage that needs attention. Many factors, including the sharp decline in exchange rates, the removal of silver from bank reserves, the increase in military spending on projects, including the conquest of Afghanistan and Burma, and the intense preparations made in response to the growing prospect of Russian aggression, all contributed to the extent of this. Dadabhai Naoroji once said that the poverty of the people was “the greatest question and question of questions.” The famines in 1897 and 1899 significantly worsened the economic impoverishment of the Indian masses. *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* by Dadabhai Naoroji, William Digby’s *Prosperous British India*, and Ramesh Chandra Dutt’s *The Economic History of British India* denounced the transfer of India’s wealth to England and the impoverishment of the peasantry.

◆ *Drain of Wealth*

#### 2.3.1.5. Lord Curzon’s Political Reforms

Lord Curzon (1899–1905), a staunch supporter of the British and a great adherent of imperialism, started a number of unpopular administrative and legislative initiatives that made educated Indians weaker. The Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act of 1899 reduced the number of elected representatives in the Calcutta Corporation, the Indian Universities Act of 1904 placed the university under the strictest possible government control, and the Indian Official Secrets Amendment Act of 1904 further curtailed freedom of the press. The pride of the educated Indians was then undoubtedly wounded by his Calcutta University Convocation speech, in which he defined the ultimate ideal of truth as basically a Western concept. However, Curzon’s policies worked like a magic remedy for reviving the Indian National Congress. The radical leaders of the Congress now attempted to seize control of the body and steer it towards a more direct and aggressive struggle with the British Empire.

◆ *Unpopular policies of Lord Curzon*

#### 2.3.1.6. Foreign Influences

During this period, a number of outside events tended to promote the rise of militant nationalism in India. The rise of Japan in 1868 proved that a declining Asian country might



◆ *Decline of the West*

advance without help from the West. Over a short period, the Japanese government established universal primary education, developed an effective modern administration, and elevated their nation to the status of a major economic and military power. The belief was that Europe was better destroyed by Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 and the Ethiopian defeat of the Italian army in 1896. People in Asia were excited to hear that a small Asian nation had defeated the largest military power in Europe. The Boer War in South Africa and revolutionary movements in Egypt, Turkey, China, Russia, Ireland, and Egypt gave the Indians hope that a united and powerful population might overthrow even the most powerful rulers. More than everything, a sense of selflessness and patriotism was required.

### 2.3.1.7. The Presence of a Militant Nationalist Intellectual Movement

◆ *Establishment of secret societies*

A militant nationalist movement had been present in India almost from the outset of the national struggle. Leaders such as Raj Narain Bose, Ashwini Kumar Dutt, and Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar, hailing from Maharashtra and Bengal, were key figures in this movement. Raj Narain Bose advocated for the establishment of secret societies structured after the Italian system. He also made a prospectus for the promotion of national feeling. It was a valiant effort to shift the Anglicised educated Bengalee's perspective towards their own culture and customs, as noted by R. C. Mazumdar. The 'Anand Math' a novel of Bankim Chandra became the nationalists' and revolutionaries' Bible.

◆ *Influence of Intellectuals*

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the renowned novelist and poet, extolled deep love for the country in his writings. Similar to that, Swami Vivekananda's neo-Vedantism also influenced people worldwide. An armed uprising against foreign rule was led by Vasudeo Balvant Phadke, marking the onset of a more radical and revolutionary phase in the Indian national movement. William Wedderburn states, "Phadke claimed to lead a national revolt along the same lines that the Marahatta power was initially founded upon." With the publication of his well-known *Nibandh Mala* in 1874, Shri Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar rose to prominence in the political process. With his forceful and caustic pen, he incited the younger generation's moral outrage against the alien authoritarian rule. He saw British rule as a misfortune and believed that the primary reason for India's overall poverty was due to colonisation.



### 2.3.2. Extremist Leadership

#### ◆ *Dharmaraj of Punjab*

Lala Lajpat Rai, a member of the Indian National Congress since 1888, has dedicated his life to serving the country's needs. He challenged the Congress's petitioning attitude towards the government and even attacked the Indian National Congress for its origin and nature. According to Lala Lajpat Rai, "the public was not involved in this movement. They did not plan it, nor did they inspire it. Nor was it an internal movement. A movement could not be considered truly national if it was planned and led by government officials or individuals who wished to gain their favour". Lala Lajpat Rai urged people to have greater faith in the political regeneration of the country since, in his opinion, a faith-deficient country cannot generate martyrs. His philanthropic deeds brought such immense joy to the people that he became known as the "Dharmaraj of the Punjab." Lala Lajpat Rai left his imprint as a journalist, author, and writer as well. Among the famous writings of those days are his monographs on Shivaji, Garibaldi, Swami Dayanand, and Mazzini, among others. He edited the 'Punjabee', a publication that sparked strong public opinion much like Tilak's Kesari did.

#### ◆ *Role of Bipin Chandra Pal*

Another prominent figure in extremism was Bipin Chandra Pal. Being one of the most influential nationalists, he was known as the 'founder of the Bengali Revolution'. He began his career as a political moderate, just like other early Congress leaders. However, over time, his perspective changed because of the policy of racial arrogance of the bureaucratic administration and the growing poverty of the Indian population. Bipin Chandra Pal lost all faith in British compassion and started to criticise the policies of the Government. In 1902, he remarked, "Agitation is not, in any sense, a test of true patriotism." His publication, 'The New India,' underwent a transformation, evolving from a mostly cultural magazine to an obviously political one. He mentioned "political changes and transformations and regarded them as almost revolutionary" in a speech given at Calcutta Town Hall. He attacked Lord Curzon and the Partition plan, realising the necessity for a "new and vigorous line of action" and the "futility of the old method of agitation through prayer, petition, and protest."

Another prominent figure in the extremist trend is Bal Gangadhar Tilak, better known as Lokamanya Tilak. He committed his whole life to serving his nation the day when he graduated from Bombay University. In the 1880s, he was



♦ *Kesari and Mahratta*

involved in the founding of the journals 'Kesari' (in Marathi) and 'Mahratta' (in English), as well as the New English School, which subsequently became Fergusson College. He began editing the Kesari in 1889, evangelising for nationalism in its columns and training readers to be brave, independent, and selfless warriors for India's freedom. In 1893, he started using songs and lectures during the traditional Ganapati festival to spread nationalist sentiments. By 1895, he established the Shivaji festival to inspire young Maharashtrians to embrace nationalism by honouring Shivaji. He started a no-tax campaign in Maharashtra between 1896 and 1897. He urged starving villagers in Maharashtra to withhold tax payments if their crops failed. In 1897, he was detained on suspicion of inciting discontent and hatred against the government. Despite this, he displayed remarkable bravery and selflessness, refusing to apologise and receiving an 18-month prison sentence.

### 2.3.3. Partition of Bengal

♦ *Divide and Rule*

When Bengal was divided in 1905, the Indian national movement entered its second phase. The British government stated that the existing province of Bengal was too large to be effectively managed by a single provincial government. Accordingly, on July 20, 1905, Lord Curzon issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into two parts: Eastern Bengal and Assam, with a population of 31 million, and the rest of Bengal, with a population of 54 million, of which 18 million were Bengalis and 36 million were Biharis. The government's goal was to put an end to Bengal's growing nationalism. The Bengali nationalists and the Indian National Congress were vehemently against the partition. Bengal's population, comprising zamindars, merchants, lawyers, students, the impoverished urban population, and even women, spontaneously revolted against the division of their province.

♦ *Weaken Bengali Nationalism*

The division was not just an administrative move for nationalists but also a challenge to Indian nationality, as it was seen as a planned attempt to divide Bengal and weaken Bengali nationalism. It will also be a major setback for the development of Bengali culture and language. The government emphasised that the division of Bengal from the Hindi-speaking portions of Bihar and Orissa would have improved administrative efficiency. Furthermore, popular opinion was completely disregarded when taking official action.

### 2.3.3.1. Anti-Partition Movement

#### ◆ Day of Mourning

On August 7, 1905, the anti-partition movement was launched. A large-scale protest against the partition was planned for the day in Town Hall, Calcutta. Delegates left this gathering with the intention of extending the movement throughout the province. The division became effective on October 16, 1905. Leaders of the protest movement proclaimed it a day of 'national mourning' and a day of fasting. In Calcutta, a hartal took place, and huge masses parading through the streets performed a national prayer prepared by Rabindranath Tagore. The sounds of 'Bande Mataram', which quickly rose to popularity as the national song and eventually the movement's theme song, filled the streets of Calcutta. They chose the day of the 'Raksha Bandhan' ceremony to symbolise unity. On this day, Bengalis wore rakhis around their wrists to signify the strong bond between different regions and among themselves. The spirit of Bengal's unity was further celebrated when Anandamohan Bose laid the cornerstone for a Federation Hall. A resolution promising the gathering to exert every effort to preserve Bengal's unity was passed after he addressed a gathering of more than fifty thousand people.

### 2.3.4. The Swadeshi and Boycott Movement

#### ◆ Boycott and Picketing

The anti-partition movement, which opposed the British decision to divide Bengal, gave rise to the Swadeshi movement. There was no denying that Bengal, home to 78 million people (about a quarter of British India's population), had become a large administrative province. The leaders of Bengal believed that simple protests, public debates, and resolutions would probably have no impact on the government. More constructive action was required to bring the intensity and ultimate expression of popular feelings to light. The solution was the 'swadeshi' and 'boycott' movement. A collective refusal to purchase British-made goods was known as a boycott. Their goal was to put the government under economic strain. Later, the boycott became a political tool. Tilak addressed the general public, saying, "If you lack the ability to resist fully, do not possess the ability to abstain from and deny yourself in a way that will prevent this foreign authority from ruling over you". Proclamations and pledges of boycotting British goods and using Indian items instead were made at massive gatherings throughout Bengal. Picketing shops selling foreign cloth and organising public burnings of foreign cloth occurred in multiple places.



◆ *Origin of the Spirit of Swadeshi*

The concept of Swadeshi was advocated for the use of domestically produced goods and was closely linked to the boycott movement. It would be inaccurate to attribute the Swadeshi movement solely to the partition agitation, as the spirit of Swadeshi had existed from the beginning. This spirit, originating from the Hindu Mela and the Arya Samaj movement led by Swami Dayananda, resonated across the nation. However, the partition of Bengal significantly intensified and mobilised the Swadeshi movement. The Swadeshi movement gained widespread popularity among nationalist newspapers. Strong ideas encouraging the use of indigenous goods spread through papers such as the *Bengalee*, *Sanjivani*, *Hitawadi*, *Dawn*, *Kesari*, *Punjabee*, and others. Indian industries benefited greatly from the Swadeshi movement.

◆ *'Bedrock of Indian Nationalism'*

Bipin Chandra Pal called the Swadeshi movement a "spiritual movement". The strength of the movement in India resides in its supreme idealism, as stated in his paper on the 'Bedrock of Indian Nationalism'. The movement is more than just a political one; rather, it is a movement that openly raises its voice for recovering the nation's economy. There were several new textile mills, soap and match industries, handloom weaving industries, national banks, and insurance providers opened. Acharya P.C. Ray established the renowned Bengal Chemical Swadeshi stores. A Swadeshi store was also opened by the renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore.

◆ *Promotion of Education*

In terms of culture, the Swadeshi movement had a number of consequences. Poetry, prose, and journalism, with a nationalist tendency, flourished well during this period. Bengali poets like Rajani Kant Sen, Mukunda Das, and Rabindranath Tagore sang their patriotic songs. Until this period, a significant portion of education was largely based on Lord Macaulay's minutes for the promotion of liberal education. Such an education had a variety of negative repercussions on Indian culture, some of which were disastrous. Renowned leaders like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghose, B. C. Pal, and others denounced this method of teaching and outlined its detrimental consequences. Nationalists, recognising that the existing educational system was inadequate and denationalising, founded national educational institutions to teach physical, technical, and literary subjects. On August 15, 1906, they established the National Council of Education to support this effort. In Calcutta, a National College was established with Aurobindo Ghose as its principal.

◆ *Call for Swaraj*

The Boycott and Swadeshi movement aimed to achieve a single goal: the call for Swaraj. Aurobindo Ghose stated in the 'Bande Mataram', a Calcutta publication, that pursuing the goals of boycott, arbitration, and national education separately and for their own sake is doomed to failure; however, pursuing these goals as part of a single coordinated attempt to achieve independence is currently necessary.

#### **2.3.4.1. Popular Participation of Swadeshi**

◆ *Student participation*

The students of Bengal played a pivotal role in the Swadeshi agitation, in practising and promoting Swadeshi and guiding the picketing of foreign cloth shops. They were considered the primary source of the Swadeshi spirit in the state. The government attempted to suppress these student movements, issuing commands to punish schools and colleges whose students actively participated in the agitation. They were to lose their grants-in-aid and other privileges, be disassociated, prohibit their students from applying for scholarships, and ban them from all government services. Students found guilty of taking part in the nationalist agitation faced disciplinary actions. Many of them received fines, were arrested, and thrown out of schools and universities.

◆ *Women participation*

The strong involvement of women in the Swadeshi agitation was a noteworthy feature of the movement. The middle-class urban women who had always prioritised their homes participated in picketing and processions. Numerous well-known Muslims joined the Swadeshi movement, including merchant Ghuznavi, well-known activist Liaquat Husain, and renowned lawyer Abdul Rasul. However, a large number of middle-class and upper-class Muslims chose to remain neutral or, under the leadership of the Nawab of Dacca, who received a loan of Rs. 14 lakhs from the government, even supported partition on the grounds that a Muslim majority would exist in East Bengal. The officials encouraged and outraged the Nawab of Dacca and others with their communal attitude. Despite its widespread appeal and the militant nationalists' goal of involving the broader population, the anti-partition struggle in Bengal did not significantly engage peasants. The movement was largely confined to the towns and the middle classes, both upper and lower, within the province.

#### **2.3.4.2. Decline of Swadeshi Movement**

Along with Bengal, other Indian provinces soon joined the call for the Swadeshi and Swaraj movements. Bombay, Madras, and northern India saw the launch of boycotts





♦ *Challenges of the movement*

of foreign goods and campaigns in favour of Bengal's unification. Tilak took the lead in introducing the Swadeshi movement to the rest of the nation. This was a challenge and an opportunity to organise a popular uprising against the British Raj and to bring the country together with a common goal. By mid-1908, the Swadeshi movement, despite its widespread participation, had nearly run its course. Several factors contributed to its decline.

♦ *Government's regressive measures*

First, the authorities put strong pressure on the movement after seeing that it had the potential to become a revolution. Prohibitions on press, processions, and public gatherings were instances of repression. Participants of the movement were penalised, forbidden from government services, expelled from government universities and schools, and occasionally physically assaulted by the police. A clear illustration of the government's mindset and policies is the Barisal Conference Case (1906), in which the police violently beat up numerous people and forced the meeting to disperse. The government took regressive measures to face the movement. Nine important leaders of Bengal were arrested and deported between 1907 and 1908, including Harisarvottam Rao of Andhra and Madras, Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai of Punjab, and Ashwini Kumar Dutt and Krishna Kumar Mitra. Tilak was also arrested and imprisoned for six years. Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal both decided to leave active politics, which was likely influenced by the government's oppressive policies. Consequently, the movement lost all of its leaders.

♦ *Internal contradictions*

Second, the movement was undermined by internal disputes, particularly the split that occurred in 1907 inside the Congress. Furthermore, even though the Swadeshi movement had expanded outside Bengal, the rest of the nation was still a long way from being ready to embrace the new political climate and style.

♦ *No organisational structure*

Third, the Swadeshi movement lacked a robust organisational structure or central organisation. It adopted various strategies, such as non-violent resistance, social reform, constructive work, and passive resistance. But unable to give these strategies a unifying, disciplined emphasis and transform these methods into real political practice.

♦ *Lack of natural logic of mass movement*

Last but not least, the movement's decline was partly due to the natural logic of mass movements. They must take breaks in order to gather strength for future struggles as they are unable to continue at the same level of militancy and

self-sacrifice, particularly in the face of extreme repression.

### 2.3.5. Surat Split

#### ♦ Limitations of the Moderates

Considering the Moderate's initial low degree of political consciousness and the enormous challenges they faced, their achievements were enormous. They, too, had experienced several setbacks. They did not establish themselves because they did not work with the common people and did not have faith in them. They did not plan any campaigns throughout India. However, the Bengal Moderates did take an active part in it within their own province. Despite their limited success in this area, their policies were predicated on the hope that they might convince the ruling class to enact political and economic reforms. The British addressed popular agitations with repression, ridiculed their politics, and showed them disregard rather than respect for their moderation.

#### ♦ Nagpur resolutions

The Extremists intended the 1907 session to be held at Nagpur (Central Provinces) with resolutions on national education, boycott, and swadeshi being reiterated, and with Tilak or Lajpat Rai as president. Because a politician from the host province could not serve as session president—Surat was located in Tilak's home province of Bombay—the Moderates sought the session to take place in Surat in order to remove Tilak from the presidency. They desired Rashbehari Ghosh to be president instead, and they also wanted the resolutions on national education, boycotts, and swadeshi to be dropped. No possibility for compromise was left after both parties took hard stances. After the inevitable split, the Moderates took control of the Congress. They wasted no time in restating their commitment to using only constitutional means to attain the aim of self-government inside the British Empire.

#### ♦ Congress Collapse

On December 26, 1907, the Congress met at Surat beside the banks of the Tapi River. The reports circulating that the Moderates intended to cancel the four Calcutta resolutions excited the Extremists. The abuse and derision directed at the Moderates were seriously hurt throughout the three days of meetings in Surat. Thus, the atmosphere during the meeting of the delegates was one of intense expectation and anger. The extremists guaranteed approval of four resolutions. The Moderates chose to oppose Rash Behari Ghose, the legitimately elected President of the year, in order to compel him to do so. Everyone who attended the meeting was ready for a confrontation. Before long, the 1600 delegates were shouting, exchanging blows, and flinging chairs at one



another. After arriving, police emptied the hallway. The Congress had adjourned. Lord Minto wrote to Morley the 'Congress Collapse' at Surat was 'a major win for us'.

### 2.3.6. Ideological Basis of Extremism

Indian patriotism and adherence to British rule were seen by the extremists as different things. In addition to glorifying India's past, the extremists promoted militant nationalism. They saw the British government as an oppressive foreign government. They wanted to liberate India from British control because they saw the British Empire as imperialism founded on capitalism. An additional significant source of influence came from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's historical works, including 'Anandamath' and its poem 'Bande Mataram'. Aurobindo Ghose represented "The Mother" as a notion that simultaneously portrayed the sacred motherland and the mother-goddess, Durga. Thus, "The Mother" and the motto "Bande Mataram" expressed both religious and nationalistic devotion. The Congress, with its intellectual concept of constitutional agitation, was unable to evoke the mass emotional appeal that it produced.

◆ *Militant nationalism*

Lajpat Rai advocated boycott and swadeshi as the national religion of the new India, the pinnacle of selfless patriotism, the means of forming an independent nation, and the driving force behind the country's fight against the British. He rejected the "sermons of unswerving loyalty" of the moderates and said that it was foolish to view India's political slavery as a useful training ground for politics. An underlying rejection of Western principles and aspirations was evident in the extremists' denial of petitions and appeals to the British Government.

◆ *Rejection of Western Principles*

In the words of Bipin Chandra Pal, "We loved the abstraction we called India, but we hated the thing that it actually was." He compared the traditional and modern forms of Indian patriotism. He said, "We were not patriotic because we loved our own history, literature, arts, industry, culture, or institutions; rather, we were patriotic because England was the model we wanted her to be. We were freed from an imagined and abstract patriotism by the new spirit."

◆ *Patriotism*

## Summarised Overview

By the end of the nineteenth century, within the National Congress, a group of opposition emerged that came to be known as the “Extremist” trend. Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra, and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab led the extremist movement in India. There were many causes for the rise of extremism in India. They were Renaissance, pathetic economic conditions, dissatisfaction with the methods of moderates, political reforms of Lord Curzon, poverty and the influence of foreign elements. The government emphasised that the division of Bengal from the Hindi-speaking portions of Bihar and Orissa would have improved administrative efficiency. Accordingly, on July 20, 1905, Lord Curzon issued an order dividing the province of Bengal into two parts. On August 7, 1905, the anti-partition movement was launched. The anti-partition movement, which was launched to protest against the British decision to divide Bengal, gave rise to the Swadeshi movement. The concept of Swadeshi, which promoted the use of goods that were produced in India, was somewhat associated with the boycott movement. Students, women and numerous well-known Muslims participated in the Swadeshi movement. There were multiple causes for the downfall of the Swadeshi movement. The decline of the Swadeshi movement can be attributed to several factors, including the government’s regressive policies, internal contradictions, inadequate organisational structure, and the inherent lack of coherence in mass mobilisation. On December 26, 1907, the Congress met at Surat, and a split became inevitable. The extremists promoted militant nationalism, an underlying rejection of Western principles and aspirations was evident in the extremists’ denial of petitions and appeals to the British Government.

## Assignments

1. Discuss the ideological difference between the Moderates and Extremists.
2. Discuss the achievements of extremist movements in India.
3. Explain the influence of the Swadeshi movement in India.

## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU





## First World War and Indian Nationalism

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, learners will be able to:

- ◆ explain the impact of the First World War on the Indian subcontinent
- ◆ evaluate the role of Annie Besant and Tilak in Home Rule agitation
- ◆ understand the nature of revolutionary terrorism in India

### Background

The First World War started in July 1914 and involved Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey on the one hand and Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia, Japan, and the United States of America on the other. With less and less land left to conquer, this fight had grown increasingly fierce and severe by the turn of the 20th century. In the early 1900s, a vigorous arms race unfolded among the major powers of the world. Fueled by their rulers' assertions that a nation's prestige, power, and status were closely tied to the extent of its colonial empire, the citizens of these countries became intensely invested in the competition for colonies. For instance, the British took great pride in the statement, "The sun never sets on the British Empire," while the Germans cried out for "a place in the sun." Every nation finds an opportunity to form alliances with other nations out of fear of becoming militarily and politically isolated by its adversaries. Suddenly, powers separated into hostile blocs or alliances. After the war finally broke out in 1914, the atmosphere throughout the world rapidly changed.

### Keywords

Ghadar, Komagata Maru, Home Rule League, Fabianism, Theosophy, Radicalism



## Discussion

### 2.4.1. Outbreak of the First World War

#### ♦ Causes of the First World War

A number of distinct factors directly or indirectly paved the way for the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. One of the main causes of the outbreak of the First World War was imperialism. Growing rivalry and the desire for more power was another reason for the war. India, as a British colony, was crucial in aiding Britain and its allies in defeating Germany and its allies. This contribution is frequently disregarded, although the Indian army battled against the German Empire in East Africa and on the Western Front. The soldiers of the Indian army served in various locations. Many Indian soldiers sacrificed their lives fighting for the British during World War I.

#### ♦ Support for the First World War

As time went on, a debate emerged among Indian leaders about British support for the First World War. The Extremist leaders backed the war effort because they thought Britain would pay for their right to self-government. The Moderates also supported the war. Nevertheless, the revolutionaries decided to seize the chance to fight against the British in order to free their country. Through the Ghadar party, which is centred in North America, the Revolutionaries carried out their activities. The beginning of the First World War was the most significant development that made the Ghadar movement inevitable.

#### ♦ New Opportunity

### 2.4.2. Ghadar Movement

The nationalist movement, which had stayed dormant since the heights of the Swadeshi movement, gained new momentum with the onset of the First World War in 1914. The Ghadar revolutionaries in North America and Lokamanya Tilak, Annie Besant, and their Home Rule Leagues in India both took advantage of this chance, although in different ways and with differing degrees of success. The leaders of the Home Rule League started a nationwide campaign to secure Home Rule, or *Swaraj*, while the Ghadarites attempted a violent overthrow of British rule.

Since 1904, a growing number of Punjabi immigrants have settled on the West Coast of North America. Many of them were peasants, mostly from the districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur in Punjab, who had no land of their own and were desperate to find a way to survive. While some had



♦ *Punjabi Immigrants in North America*

previously sought work in the Far East, the Malay States, and Fiji, others arrived directly from their villages in Punjab. Many of them were ex-soldiers who had travelled to far-off places as part of their duty in the British Indian army and were aware of the opportunities that those places offered. Driven from their houses by financial difficulties and enticed by the idea of creating a prosperous and new life for themselves and their family, they pledged their possessions sold or mortgaged their land. They started their journey to the promised territories. But the greeting that awaited the exhausted travellers in the USA and Canada was not what they had anticipated. Many were turned away upon arrival, particularly those who had come straight from their villages and were ignorant of Western customs and manners. Those who were permitted to remain faced not only racism but also the wrath of the White labour force and unions, who were jealous of the competition they provided.

♦ *Restrictions on Indian Immigration*

The Secretary of State for India had personal motivations for supporting immigration restrictions. Firstly, he believed that the close-knit relationships between Indians and Whites that would inevitably form in America could damage the British reputation, as India's control was maintained more by prestige than by force. In addition, he was concerned that the immigrants would be infiltrated by socialist ideologies and that the racial prejudice they would undoubtedly face would fuel nationalist unrest in India. In 1908, as a consequence of the combined pressure, Indian immigration into Canada was effectively restricted.

♦ *Sparkles in North America*

The British government was willing for Indians to travel to Fiji to work for British planters. Still, it was wary of their migration to North America, fearing they might adopt ideas of liberty. Tarak Nath Das, an Indian student and early leader in North America, recognised this and launched *Free Hindustan* in Vancouver, adopting a militant nationalist stance. A political exile on the West Coast, Ramnath Puri issued the *Circular-e-Azadi* (Circular of Liberty) in 1907, pledging his support for the Swadeshi Movement. G.D. Kumar established the Swadesh Sevak Home in Vancouver, modelled after India House in London. He also started publishing the Gurmukhi newspaper 'Swadesh Sevak', which called for social reform and called on Indian troops to rise in revolt against the British.

After being expelled from Vancouver in 1910, Tarak Nath Das and G.D. Kumar established the United India House in

◆ *Public Meetings*

Seattle, Washington, where they gave lectures to a group of twenty-five Indian labourers on Saturdays. Strong ties also formed between the Khalsa Diwan Society and the United India House group, which was primarily made up of radical nationalist students. In 1913, they decided to send a committee to meet with the Viceroy and Colonial Secretary in London and other officials in India. They waited a whole month for the Colonial Secretary in London to find time to visit them. But in India, they managed to meet the Viceroy and the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab. The press and the public enthusiastically supported them during a series of public meetings held in Lahore, Ludhiana, Ambala, Ferozepur, Jullundur, Amritsar Lyallpur, Gujranwala, Sialkot, and Simla as a result of their visit.

◆ *Rise of Discontent*

This continuous protest led to the development of a nationalist consciousness and a sense of unity among immigrant Indians in both Canada and the United States. The Indian or British governments failed to intervene on their behalf regarding immigration restrictions and other issues, such as those imposed by the alien Land law that effectively prohibited Indians from owning land in the US. An impatience and a mood of discontent that eventually blossomed into a revolutionary movement.

◆ *Bhagwan Singh*

Bhagwan Singh, a Sikh revolutionary with connections in Hong Kong and the Malaya States, played a significant role in the revolutionary movement in Canada. Arriving in Vancouver in 1907, Singh was influential in inspiring Indian expatriates to engage in the struggle against British colonial rule. He promoted the use of "Bande Mataram" as a revolutionary slogan and advocated for the violent overthrow of British rule. His activities were instrumental in galvanising the Indian revolutionary movement in Canada. After spending a few months in Canada, Singh was expelled due to his radical activities and advocacy for violence.

◆ *On the Path of revolution*

The US swiftly became the focal point of revolutionary activity because it offered a comparatively free political atmosphere. The pivotal part was played by an Indian political exile, Lala Har Dayal. After arriving in California in April 1911, Har Dayal taught for a short period at Stanford University before devoting himself to politics. He focused mostly on giving lectures on the anarchist and syndicalist movements to various American groups of intellectuals, radicals, and workers throughout 1912. The Indian immigrant community's issues did not significantly impact him, but the





bombing of Viceroy Lord Hardinge in Delhi on December 23, 1912, sparked his interest. He reaffirmed his belief that the British rule in India might be overthrown by revolution. He issued the 'Yugantar Circular' and praised the attack on the Viceroy.

◆ *Ideas of Har Dayal*

In May 1913, the Hindi Association was established in Portland. The Association's first meeting took place in Kanshi Rain's home. Bhai Parmanand, Sohan Singh Bhakna, and Harnam Singh "Tundilat" attended the meeting. Har Dayal presented his strategy, which was to "use the freedom that is available in the US to fight against the British, rather than fighting the Americans; you will never be treated as equals by the Americans until you are free in your own land; the core cause of Indian poverty and degradation is British rule, and it must be overthrown, not by petitions but by targeted revolt; carry this message to the masses and the soldiers of the Indian Army; go to India in large numbers and enlist their support." Ideas put forth by Har Dayal were immediately accepted. The decision was made to establish a working committee, launch a weekly publication named 'The Ghadar', and locate its headquarters at Yugantar Ashram in San Francisco. Subsequent meetings were conducted in several towns and cities, culminating in a representative meeting in Astoria to ratify and endorse the decisions made at the initial meeting in Portland. Thus, the Ghadar movement had started.

◆ *Ghadar*

The Ghadar terrorists launched a massive propaganda campaign, touring the farms and mills where the majority of Punjabi immigrant labourers worked. These political activists made the Yugantar Ashram as their base of operations. The first edition of 'Ghadar' was published in Urdu on November 1, 1913 and the Grumukhi version on December 9 1913. The goal of the paper was obvious from its title. The word 'Ghadar' means 'revolt'. Each issue of the paper called for "Angrezi Raj Ka Kacha Chittha", which translates to "An Expose of British Rule."

◆ *Chittha*

The 'Chittha' comprised fourteen points listing the detrimental effects of British rule: the destruction of Indian arts and industries; the increasing land tax; the low per capita income of Indians; the high military expenditures relative to health care; the recurrence of famines and plagues that killed millions of Indian lives; the use of Indian tax payers' money for wars in Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, Persia, and China; the policy of aiding Christian missionaries with funds raised from Hindus and Muslims, the discriminatory lenient

treatment given to Englishmen who were guilty of killing Indians or dishonouring Indian women, and the attempt to plant discord between Hindus and Muslims.

◆ *Solutions of Chittha*

All Ghadar readers received a weekly summary of the whole critique of British rule raised by the Indian national movement. The solution was offered by the Chittha's final two points: the first point is that there are seven crores of Indians living in the Indian States and twenty-four crores in British India; in contrast, there are only 79,614 Englishmen serving as officers and soldiers and 38,948 as volunteers. The second point is that with fifty-six years having passed since the Revolt of 1857, a second one is now desperately needed.

◆ *Ghadar di Goonj*

Additionally, *The Ghadar* newspaper highlighted the courageous actions of the Anushilan Samiti and the Yugantar group, along with the activities of Russian secret organisations. It also referenced the contributions of notable figures such as Shyamji Krishna Varma, Madame Cama, Ajit Singh, Sufi Amba Prasad, and Aurobindo. The poetry that was included in 'The Ghadar', which was later compiled and published as 'Ghadar di Goonj' and circulated for free, had possibly the greatest influence. The secular and revolutionary tone of these poems were equally distinctive. The Ghadar was extensively disseminated among Indian populations residing in North America in just a couple of months and was embraced by communities established in the Philippines, Hong Kong, China, the Malay States, Singapore, Trinidad, Honduras, and India. It provoked an intense debate that had never been seen before.

◆ *Har Dayal*

It is hardly surprising that the Ghadar movement was able to swiftly shift the Punjabi immigrant's identity from that of a loyal British soldier to a rebel, whose primary aim became the overthrow of British rule from his homeland. Finally, in 1914, the arrest and subsequent escape of Har Dayal, the Komagata Maru tragedy, and the outbreak of World War I all had an impact on the Ghadar movement. Har Dayal was taken into custody on March 25, 1914, allegedly due to his anarchist activities. After being granted bail, he took advantage of the chance to evade the country. That marked the abrupt end of his active involvement with the Ghadar Movement.

#### 2.4.2.1. Komagata Maru Incident

The ship Komagata Maru embarked on its fateful journey



◆ *Restrictions on Immigration*

to Canada in March 1914. Canada enforced severe restrictions by introducing regulations on Indian immigration that prohibited admittance for anyone other than those who travelled continuously from India. However, in November 1913, the Canadian Supreme Court permitted the admission of thirty-five Indians who had not travelled continuously.

◆ *Views on Canadian judgement*

Inspired by the aforementioned judgement, Gurdit Singh, an Indian contractor residing in Singapore, made the decision to charter a ship in order to transport Indians residing in different parts of East and Southeast Asia to Vancouver. The ship set off for Vancouver with 376 Indian passengers on board. Ghadar activists visited the ship in Japan's Yokohama, where they delivered lectures and provided literature. The Punjabi press threatened consequences regarding the Indians being denied admission into Canada. A different approach was adopted by the Canadian press, and some Vancouver-based newspapers warned readers about the "Mounting Oriental Invasion." In the meantime, the Canadian government had closed the legal loopholes that led to the Supreme Court's judgement in November 1913.

◆ *The Shore Committee*

The Police blocked the ship and fenced off the port when it landed in Vancouver. A "Shore Committee" was formed to fight for the rights of the passengers. The Committee was led by Husain Rahim, Sohan Lal Pathak, and Balwant Singh. Money was raised, and protests were planned. There had been speculation of an Indian uprising against the British. A strong campaign was launched in the United States, and people planned to get ready for insurrection under the leadership of Bhagwan Singh, Barkatullah, Ram Chandra, and Sohan Singh Bhakna.

◆ *Landing of Komagata Maru*

The Komagata Maru was compelled to leave the Canadian seas shortly after. The First World War broke out before the ship reached Yokohama, and the British Government ordered that passengers could only disembark at Calcutta, not anywhere along the route, not even in the locations where they had boarded the ship. The ship caused a wave of animosity and fury among the Indian people at every port it sailed into, which served as the catalyst for anti-British mobilisation. When they landed at Budge Budge, Calcutta, the agitated and worried passengers rebelled against the police, inciting them with their aggressive attitude. This resulted in a fight that left eighteen dead and 202 arrested.

The leading Ghadar Movement activists met in secret

◆ *Ailan -e- Jung*

and decided that it was better to die than to do nothing at all. Their shortage of weapons could be solved by travelling to India and enlisting the support of Indian soldiers. The Ghadar Party published the 'Ailan-e-Jung', or 'Proclamation of War', and actively disseminated it. A number of public gatherings were planned and addressed by Mohammed Barkatullah, Ram Chandra, and Bhagwan Singh with the goal of encouraging Indians to return to their homeland and plan an armed uprising against the British. Leading figures were dispatched to convince Indians residing in Singapore, Burma, Japan, the Philippines, China, Hong Kong and the Malay States to rejoin the insurgents upon their return. The Ghadar activists, including Kartar Singh Sarabha and Raghubar Dayal, departed for India.

◆ *Suppression of Ghadar movement*

The British government patiently waited for its time until the return of emigrants. They were well aware of the Ghadar plans, which were scarcely secret. After being carefully inspected upon their arrival, the immigrants were forced to stay in their hometowns. Among them, the more "dangerous" ones were jailed, and the "safe" ones were allowed to return home. Understandably, a few of "the dangerous" ones managed to get away and instigate revolt in Punjab. Five thousand of the estimated eight thousand emigrants who returned to India were permitted to go ahead unaffected. Among them, 704 had been confined to their villages, and 189 were imprisoned. Numerous individuals who arrived through Colombo and South India managed to escape into Punjab without being identified.

◆ *Decline of Ghadarites*

The Ghadarites believed that Punjab would join the Ghadar in 1914, but they discovered that Punjab was totally indifferent. Despite their best efforts, the foreign militants were unsuccessful in their attempts to travel the villages and address crowds at festivals and *melas*. Declaring them to be criminals and "fallen" Sikhs, Chief Khalsa Diwan assisted the government in finding them while reaffirming his devotion to the sovereign. Disappointed and frustrated with public attitudes, the Ghadarites turned their focus to the army, making several attempts in November 1914 to incite revolt among army divisions. However, all of the Ghadar's attempts were blocked by the absence of an organised leadership.

#### **2.4.2.2. Rash Behari Bose**

The Ghadar searched desperately for a leader. Rash Behari Bose, a revolutionary from Bengal who gained popularity for his courageous attack on the Viceroy Hardinge, finally



◆ *Role of Rash Behari Bose*

reached Punjab in mid-January 1915. He took charge of the uprising. Rash Behari Bose established an organisation and dispatched individuals to meet with army units in various locations (from Bannu in the North-West Frontier to Faizabad and Lucknow in the U.P.) with the goal of receiving a report by February 11, 1915. After their hopeful reports, the emissaries went back, and the mutiny date was fixed, first for February 21 and then for February 19, 1915. However, the government was able to take successful preventative action, and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) managed to infiltrate the organisation from the top down. Bose managed to escape, but most of the commanders were taken into custody. In reality, the Ghadar Movement was crushed. Nevertheless, the government didn't end there. Conspiracy trials were held in Punjab and Mandalay, resulting in the execution of 45 revolutionaries and the long imprisonment of over 200. This was arguably the most oppressive measure taken against the national movement thus far. Consequently, a generation of Punjabi nationalist leaders was politically dismembered.

◆ *Unsuccessful efforts*

With assistance from Germany, a few Indian revolutionaries who were based in Berlin and had ties to the American Ghadar leader Ram Chandra continued in their efforts to encourage a mutiny among Indian soldiers serving overseas. Barkatullah and Raja Mahendra Pratap made several attempts to establish a provisional government in Kabul and even sought the support of the Amir of Afghanistan. But none of them became successful.

### 2.4.2.3. Ghadar Ideology

◆ *Secular in Nature*

Although Sikhs made up the majority of the Ghadar Movement's leaders and participants, the philosophy that was developed and disseminated through 'The Ghadar', 'Ghadar di Goonj', and other publications had a distinctly secular tone. Leaders from all areas and religions were welcomed into the movement. Barkatullah was a Muslim, Rash Behari Bose was a Hindu and a Bengali, and Lala Har Dayal, Ram Chandra, and numerous more were Hindus. More importantly, the Ghadarites deliberately sought to instil a secular approach among the Punjabis. Furthermore, the Ghadar Movement used 'Bande Mataram', a nationalist salutation, as their slogan.

The Ghadarites also did not demonstrate any restricted regional loyalty. The democratic and egalitarian elements of the Ghadar ideology were another noteworthy aspect.



◆ *Egalitarian  
Worldview*

The Ghadarites made it quite evident that their goal was the establishment of an independent Indian republic. Har Dayal also brought an egalitarian worldview to the movement, and he was greatly influenced by socialist, anarchist, and syndicalist groups. This made it easier for a lot of Ghadarites later to become Communists and peasant leaders in the 1920s and 1930s.

◆ *Internationalist  
Perspective*

Another significant contribution made by Har Dayal was giving the Ghadar revolutionaries a genuinely internationalist perspective. Russian, Mexican, and Irish revolutionaries were frequently mentioned in his speeches and writings. Ghadar militants were, therefore, characterised by an internationalist perspective that was non-chauvinistic, egalitarian, democratic, and secular.

#### **2.4.2.4. Weakness of Ghadar Movement**

◆ *Underestimation  
of Strength*

The primary weakness in the Ghadar leaders' strategy was their gross underestimation of the amount of organisational, ideological, strategic, tactical, and financial preparation that had to be done before attempting to organise an armed uprising. The Komagata Maru incident and the sudden outbreak of the World War caught them off guard. Thus, they raised the alarm without assessing the strength of their force. They ignored the fact that organising a small number of discontented Indian immigrants was very different from organising and inspiring thousands of peasants and soldiers in India. These individuals were already deeply embittered by the racial discrimination they had experienced at the hands of white foreigners. However, they underestimated the formidable power of the British in India, including their organisational and strategic capabilities, as well as the intellectual foundations that sustained their rule.

◆ *Lack of  
Leadership*

Additionally, the Ghadar Movement was unable to produce a leader who could successfully integrate the elements of the movement. Having a personality completely unfit as an organiser, Har Dayal was more of an ideologue, an inspiration, and a propagandist. The Ghadar Movement was primarily supported by the militants' enthusiasm rather than their efficient organisation, which constituted another significant weakness of the movement. These comprehension, leadership and organisational shortcomings combined to produce what can only be described as an enormous waste of valuable human resources.

#### **2.4.3. Home Rule League**



◆ *Phase of Inactivity*

Indians residing overseas responded dramatically to the First World War with the romantic adventure of the Ghadar revolutionaries. Now we discuss the more successful but less controversial Indian answer, the Home Rule League, headed by Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak. The Indian National Congress was still reeling from the combined blows of the 1907 split at Surat, the government's severe suppression of Swadeshi Movement activists, and the Moderates' disappointment with the constitutional reforms of 1909. During this period Aurobindo Ghose, had taken sanyas in Pondicherry, while Lala Lajpat Rai was in America.

◆ *Readmission into the Indian National Congress*

Bal Gangadhar Tilak served a six-year prison term, the majority of which he spent in Mandalay, Burma, and he was freed on June 16, 1914. He brought back with him a completely different India from the one he had been exiled to. At first, Tilak dedicated all of his efforts to obtaining readmission into the Indian National Congress for himself and other extremists. A large number of the Congress's Moderate leaders were likewise dissatisfied with the decision they had made in Surat in 1907 and the Congress's near-complete inaction. As a result, they responded to Tilak's advances with much sympathy. In addition, Annie Besant, who had recently joined the Indian National Congress and was eager to spark nationalist movements, put a lot of pressure on them to accept the Extremists.

#### **2.4.3.1. Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak**

◆ *Model of Irish Home Rule League*

Annie Besant started her political career in England as an advocate of Fabianism, theosophy, radicalism, and free thought. In 1893, she moved to India to work for the Theosophical Society. From her base in the Madras suburb of Adyar, she had been promoting theosophy since 1907. She had amassed a sizable following among educated people of numerous groups. She decided to expand the scope of her work in 1914 and start a Home Rule movement modelled after the Irish Home Rule League. She came to the realisation that in order to do this, she needed the Extremists' active support in addition to the Congress' approval. She consequently focused her efforts on getting the support of the Moderate leaders to allow Tilak and his fellow Extremists to join the Congress.

The Congress meeting in December 1914 was disappointing as Pherozeshah Mehta and his Bombay Moderate faction defeated Gokhale and the Bengal Moderates, effectively excluding the Extremists. In response, Tilak and Besant

◆ “New India’ and  
‘Commonweal’

decided independently to resume political activities while continuing to pressure the Congress to reintegrate the Extremist faction. Through her publications, *New India* and *Commonweal*, Annie Besant organised public gatherings and conferences in early 1915 to campaign for self-government for India, similar to the White colonies, following World War I. Her approach became notably more aggressive as she advanced this cause.

◆ Formation of  
local associations

In the meantime, Lokamanya started his political career. Still, he was concerned about avoiding upsetting the Moderates or giving the impression that he was avoiding Congress because he had not yet been admitted into Congress. During their meeting in Poona in May 1915, his supporters decided to establish an organisation “to enlighten the villagers regarding the objects and work of the Congress”. In August and September 1915, local associations were formed in different parts of Maharashtra, with a primary focus on highlighting the necessity of maintaining unity within the Congress rather than intensifying political engagement. Tilak nevertheless intended to win over the Moderates with his prudence and rationality, even though he occasionally used threats to frighten the more conservative members of the Moderates.

◆ Accepting  
Extremists

Both Tilak and Annie Besant’s efforts quickly bore fruit. In December 1915, at the Congress’s annual session, it was decided that the extremists should rejoin Congress. The death of Pherozeshah Mehta significantly undermined the Bombay group’s opposition. However, Annie Besant was unable to win over the Muslim League and the Congress because of her idea to establish Home Rule League. Nevertheless, she was successful in convincing the Congress to dedicate itself to a campaign of educational propaganda and the revival of local Congress Committees. She had inserted a clause stating that she would be free to form her own League if Congress did not begin this by September 1916.

Tilak took the initiative to form the Home Rule League in April 1916 at the Bombay Provincial Conference in Belgaum. Annie Besant’s adherents, dissatisfied with her choice to postpone starting the Home Rule League until September, obtained her consent. All India Propaganda Fund was established by Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Shankerlal Banker, and Indulal Yagnik, together with the Bombay newspaper ‘Young India’, with the goal of publishing pamphlets in both English and regional languages. Through a tour of Maharashtra,



◆ *Propagation of Home Rule League*

Tilak advanced the Home Rule movement, and his lectures made the need for Home Rule clear and widely accepted. Additionally, he raised the demands for the establishment of linguistic states and vernacular education. Tilak's League published two English and six Marathi pamphlets, selling 47,000 copies each, to strengthen its propaganda activities. Additionally, brochures in Gujarati and Kannada were released. Six branches of the League were established. Two were in Berar, and one each was in Central Provinces, Bombay, Karnataka, and Central Maharashtra.

◆ *The British Retaliation*

As the Home Rule movement began to gain popularity, the Government retaliated. On Tilak's sixtieth birthday, July 23, 1916, during a grand celebration, he was issued a notice by the Government demanding 60,000 rupees as security. He sought an explanation as to why he should not be bound for a year to ensure good behaviour. A group of lawyers headed by Mohammed Ali Jinnah defended Tilak, and he lost the case at the Magistrate's Court. But the High Court acquitted him in November 1916. Tilak and his allies decided to step up their propaganda campaign for Home Rule as soon as possible, bringing home the benefit with his public speeches that Home Rule now had official government support. Tilak gathered fourteen thousand members by April 1917.

#### **2.4.3.2. Annie Besant's Home Rule League**

◆ *Structure of the League*

Seeing no progress in the Congress, Annie Besant announced in September 1916 that she was going to form her own Home Rule League, with George Arundale, a theosophical follower, as the organising secretary. In the meantime, in September 1916, Annie Besant officially founded her Home Rule League. Her League's structure was far looser than Tilak's; three members could form a branch. But Tilak's League had six branches, each with its area and set of operations. Annie Besant's League established two hundred branches, which included both town branches and clusters of villages. Additionally, the League comprised thirty-four founding branches and organised a formal Executive Council of seven members, each serving a three-year term. Annie Besant and her lieutenants, Arundale, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, and B.P. Wadia, handled the majority of the work from her headquarters in Adyar. Additionally, there was no formal system in place for communicating instructions; instead, members communicated with one another and with Arundale's column on Home Rule in New India. Compared to Tilak, Annie Besant's League saw



a slower pace of membership growth. Her League attracted 7,000 members by March 1917.

◆ *Assigning Two Leagues*

By clearly defining their respective domains of activity, the two Leagues were able to avoid any conflict. Tilak's League was assigned to work in Maharashtra (apart from Bombay), Karnataka, the Central Provinces, and Berar. Annie Besant's League was assigned responsibility for the rest of India. According to Annie Besant, the reason the two Leagues did not combine was because "some of his followers disliked me and some of mine disliked him. But we didn't fight with one another".

◆ *Spread of Home Rule League*

In addition to Besant's existing Theosophical members, numerous others joined the Home Rule League, including Jawaharlal Nehru in Allahabad and B. Chakravarti and J. Banerjee in Calcutta. However, the number of branches did not fully reflect the League's actual power, as some remained merely adjuncts of Theosophical organisations despite many being quite active. For example, although there were numerous branches in Madras, many of them were inactive. In contrast, there was a branch in Bombay, four branches in U.P. towns, and numerous branches in villages in Gujarat.

◆ *Demand for Home Rule*

The main goal of the League was to increase the agitation demanding home rule. The goal was to accomplish this through encouraging political discussion and education. Through 'New India', Arundale gave instructions to the members regarding political discussion, setting up of libraries with resources on national politics, planning classes for students, printing and distributing pamphlets, raising funds for programmes, coordinating social work, participate in local government initiatives, plan political gatherings and lectures, and convince friends to support Home Rule by making arguments for it. Many of the branches engaged in the duty of encouraging political discussions and debates.

◆ *Activities of the League*

Annie Besant's League was formally established in September 1916 and sold 300,000 copies of 26 English pamphlets that were primarily with the Indian government and the benefits of self-government. These pamphlets were reprinted and also released in Indian languages. Public speeches and gatherings were regularly held in the majority of its branches. Additionally, they would always respond if a nationwide call to protest any particular issue was raised. For instance, most of the branches met and delivered resolutions of grievance to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State at





Arundale's request after Annie Besant was expelled from the Central Provinces and Berar in November 1916. The response to Tilak's externment from Delhi and Punjab in February 1917 was identical. A large number of Moderates joined the Home Rule movement because they were unhappy with the Congress's inactivity. Even though they were not allowed to join the League, the members of Gokhale's Servants of India Society were urged to support the cause of Home rule by giving lectures and distributing pamphlets.

◆ *Support to the League*

In order to prepare for the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress in December 1916, a large number of moderate nationalists accompanied the Home Rule Leaguers in Uttar Pradesh on their tour of the nearby towns and villages. Their meetings were typically held in the local Bar libraries in the area, and attendees included professionals, businesspeople, students, and farmers. They discussed the key components of European liberation revolutions while speaking in Hindi and drawing comparisons between India's glorious past and India's poverty.

#### **2.4.4.Lucknow Pact**

◆ *Home Rule Special*

The Indian National Congress met at Lucknow in December 1916, providing the eagerly awaited chance for the Home Rule Leaguers to show their power. Tilak's Home Rule League started a custom that would become a staple of subsequent Congress annual sessions: delegates from Western India were transported to Lucknow by special train, which was dubbed the "Congress Special" or the "Home Rule Special." In order to flood the Congress with Home Rule Leaguers, Arundale invited every League member to meet for election as a delegate to the Lucknow session. The president, Ambika Charan Mazumdar, who leans moderately, welcomed Tilak and his followers back into Congress.

◆ *Lucknow Session*

The renowned Congress League Pact of 1916, commonly referred to as the Lucknow Pact was made possible by the Lucknow Congress. To the dismay of numerous influential figures, including Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tilak, and Annie Besant, who had been instrumental in bringing about this agreement between the Congress and the League. Tilak and Annie Besant were instrumental in bringing about this agreement between the Congress and the League despite the objections of numerous significant figures, including Madan Mohan Malaviya.

In order to move towards self-government, the Congress

◆ *Establishment of Working Committee*

in Lucknow also called for more constitutional reforms. For the sake of keeping the Congress united the Home Rule Leaguers accepted this even if it did not go as far as they had hoped. The moderate opposition rejected Tilak's proposal for Congress to establish a cohesive Working Committee to oversee daily operations and implement annual resolutions. Tilak hoped that this would enable the Congress to transition from a deliberative body to one that could lead a sustained movement.

◆ *The Congress League Pact*

Around a thousand delegates attended the joint gathering of the two Home Rule Leagues, which took place following the conclusion of the Congress session. Tilak and Annie Besant both delivered speeches at the session, and the Congress-League Pact was welcomed. Both leaders conducted triumphant tours in North, Central, and Eastern India. The British government rose against the Home Rule Movement. The Madras government issued an order prohibiting students from attending political gatherings.

◆ *Arrest of Mrs. Besant*

The Government of Madras's decision to arrest Mrs. Besant and her companions, B.P. Wadia and George Arundale, in June 1917 marked a turning point in the movement. There was a nationwide protest against their imprisonment. Sir S. Subramania Aiyar relinquished his knighthood. Many moderate figures, including Madan Mohan Malaviya, Surendranath Banerjee, and M.A. Jinnah, joined the Home Rule Leagues to express their support for the internees and their disapproval of the government's actions. In September 1917, Annie Besant was set free in accordance with the conciliatory nature of the Montague Declaration. At the height of her popularity, Annie Besant was chosen as president during the Congress's annual session in December 1917 at Tilak's proposal.

◆ *Legacy of Home Rule Movement*

The Home Rule Movement's greatest legacy is the generation of passionate nationalists who became the core of the national movement during its mass phase under Mahatma's guidance. Home Rule Leagues fostered a widespread pro-nationalist climate throughout the nation by restoring the concept of Home Rule or self-government.

### **2.4.5. Terrorist Movements in India**

By the end of 1907, another political trend had still become prominent. The restless youth of Bengal adopted the route of revolutionary terrorism (a word we use neutrally and for lack of a better word). The main reason for this was that



◆ *The Politics of the Bomb*

they had nowhere else to show their patriotism. Despite Bengali youth's anger towards the Congress Moderates' "mendicancy" and their official arrogance and repression, the Extremists' failure to provide an encouraging role model also contributed to their engagement with "the politics of the bomb."

◆ *Nature of a Revolutionary*

The Extremists, who were critics of the Moderates, delivered a pointed, mostly accurate, and persuasive critique. They effectively highlighted the importance of engaging the general population and advocated for a shift in the nature of past agitation and propaganda. They proposed a more militant approach to nonviolent resistance, which included boycotting foreign clothing, foreign courts, foreign schools, and other British establishments. They had also pushed for continuous opposition to the government. However, they had been unable to identify formats that would allow all of these concepts to be put into practice. Neither could they genuinely define the movement differently from the Moderates' definition, nor could they establish a workable organisation to lead it. They were more aggressive, and they used to criticise British rule. They were prepared to suffer more and make sacrifices, but they were unable to get beyond this level of agitation. They were unable to introduce new modes of political struggle.

◆ *Attack on Barisal Conference*

Thus, by the end of 1907, they had also reached a political dead end. Maybe that's one of the reasons they threw so much of their force into taking over the Congress and denouncing the Moderates. Not surprisingly, the young people who chose to use physical force were unimpressed by the Extremists' hesitation. In April 1906, following the police attack on the peaceful Barisal Conference, 'The Yugantar', a publication that reflected this disillusionment, wrote: "The thirty crores of people inhabiting India must raise their sixty crores of hands to stop this curse of oppression."

◆ *Strategies of Russian nihilists and populists*

A popular mass rebellion would inevitably take a long time and be challenging to organise. While many considered attempting to undermine the army's allegiance, they recognised the difficulty of such an endeavour. Despite these long-term ambitions, the revolutionary youth opted to emulate the strategies of Russian nihilists and populists, as well as align with nationalist movements for the time being. In other words, they made the decision to plan the murder of unpopular British officials. The people's patriotic inclinations

would be satisfied, their fear of authority would be defeated, and the rulers would be terrified by such assassinations.

◆ *Promoted Revolution*

A growing number of young men began engaging in revolutionary terrorism. Once more, the youth were let down by the extremist leadership. Although they were commended for their bravery and selflessness, they were not given a constructive outlet for their revolutionary energies or taught the political distinction between a revolution based on individual action and an evolution based on mass activity. Aurobindo Ghose actually supported this idea. The Extremist leadership felt that it was inappropriate to criticise the courageous youth who were being vilified politically, which limited their efforts.

◆ *Emergence of Secret Societies*

Following 1905, a number of publications started endorsing revolutionary terrorism. Secret societies of revolutionaries quickly arose throughout the nation. Abhinav Bharat, a covert revolutionary society, was established in 1904 by V.D. Savarkar. Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar emerged as the most well-known and enduring revolutionary secret society. They raised money for the acquisition of weapons and other items by assassinating tyrannical authorities, informants, and traitors from inside their own ranks. These then became referred to as Swadeshi dacoities.

◆ *Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose*

An unsuccessful attempt was made on the life of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1907. In April 1908, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose, believing that Kingsford, the unpopular judge of Muzaffarpur, was inside a carriage, threw a bomb at it but killed two English women instead. Khudiram Bose was being tried and hanged, and Prafulla Chaki shot himself to death. Khudiram Bose and Chaki became well-known nationalist heroes who inspired folk songs that were sung around the nation.

◆ *Assassination of British Officials*

There was a failed attempt to assassinate Viceroy Lord Hardinge on December 23, 1912, orchestrated by Rash Behari Bose and Sachin Sanyal. During a state procession in Delhi, a bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge while he was riding an elephant, resulting in injuries to the Viceroy and several others. This act of revolutionary terrorism was among the notable attempts to challenge British rule in India. Another significant act was Madan Lal Dhingra's assassination of Sir Curzon-Wyllie in London in 1909. Between 1908 and 1918, the British authorities executed or convicted 186 revolutionaries involved in such activities. Additionally, the revolutionary



◆ *Suppression  
of revolutionary  
terrorism*

terrorists opened up centres overseas, some of the most prominent figures being Madame Cama and Ajit Singh in Europe and Shyamji Krishnavarma, V.D. Savarkar, and Har Dayal in London.

The intensity of revolutionary terrorism waned with time. The individual revolutionaries, grouped in small secret organisations, lacked a mass foundation and, in spite of extraordinary bravery, were unable to endure suppression by the powerful colonial power. However, in spite of their “small numbers and eventual failure,” they significantly aided India’s nationalist movement. They restored the dignity of our manhood to us.

## Summarised Overview

The First World War broke out in 1914 as a result of a number of different events. Imperialism was one of the primary factors that led to the beginning World War I. The war was also sparked by growing rivalry and a desire for power. Although in distinct ways and with varying degrees of success, both the Ghadar revolutionaries in North America and Lokamanya Tilak, Annie Besant, and their Home Rule Leagues in India took advantage of this opportunity. Following the Ghadarites’ violent efforts, the leaders of the Home Rule League launched a statewide campaign to secure Home Rule or Swaraj.

Ghadarites began a large propaganda campaign and visited the farms and mills where most Punjabi immigrant labourers worked. In April 1916, Tilak spearheaded the formation of the Home Rule League during the Bombay Provincial Conference held in Belgaum. With no progress from the side of the Congress, Annie Besant announced in September 1916 that her Home Rule League would be founded, and George Arundale, a theosophical disciple, would serve as the League’s organising secretary. Another political trend gained prominence by the end of 1907 known as revolutionary terrorism. Bengal’s restless youth chose the path of revolutionary terrorism. They had proposed a militant policy of nonviolent resistance.



## Assignments

1. Discuss the programmes of the Home League under the leadership of Tilak and Annie Besant.
2. Explain the significance of the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress.
3. Analyse the significance of the Ghadar movement and how its ideology influenced the national movement.
4. Discuss the international ideologies that influenced the Indian national movement.
5. Describe the role of Secret societies in national movements and how they significantly aided India's nationalist movement.

## Suggested Reading

1. Chandra, Bipan, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, 1987.
2. Chand, Tara, *History of Freedom Movement in India* (3Vols) Pub. Division, 1961.
3. Gellner, Ernest, *Nation and Nationalism*, Basil Blackwell, OUP, 1983.
4. Gosh, S.C., *History of Education in Modern India*, UBS Pub, Delhi, 2009
5. Smith, D. Antony, *The Antiquity of Nations*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2004.

## Reference

1. Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, 1998.
2. \_\_\_\_\_, *Modern India*, NCERT Books, New Delhi, 2000.
3. Desai, A.R., *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Delhi, 1987.
4. Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India, 1887-1947*, McMillan, Madras, 1983.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, People's Publishing House, 1973.
6. Seal, Anil, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.



## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

# Gandhian Era

## **BLOCK-03**





## Ideas and Methods of Gandhi

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ evaluate the Gandhian experiments in South Africa
- ♦ appraise the role of Gandhiji in Champaran Satyagraha, Kheda Satyagraha and Ahmedabad Mill Strike
- ♦ acknowledge the Gandhian ideas of struggle

### Background

This unit explores Gandhi's rise in Indian politics, his role in organising protests and leading the South African anti-racial discrimination movement, and his use of nonviolence and Satyagraha as political tools during his South African protest. Following the conclusion of World War I, nationalist activity in India resurged, with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's arrival on the political scene transforming the Indian struggle against imperialism into a broad-based popular struggle, marking a significant shift in the political context of the nation. Peasants and workers in Champaran, Kheda, and Ahmedabad initiated local issues, which Gandhi supported using Satyagraha. Gandhi supported these movements and used Satyagraha to address their grievances. The success of these movements elevated the hope for Gandhi's leadership, propelling him to the forefront of the Indian national movement. In this unit, we also discuss the Gandhian ideas of struggle.

### Keywords

Satyagraha, Non-Violence, Passive Resistance, Racial Discrimination, Civil Disobedience, Non-Cooperation



## Discussion

### ◆ *Indians in South Africa*

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi began his journey in 1893 as a barrister in South Africa, where he fought against racial discrimination. In 1893, Gandhi arrived in Durban to resolve the legal issues of Gujarati merchant Dada Abdullah. He was the first highly-educated Indian barrister to arrive in South Africa. Indian immigration to South Africa started in 1890 when White settlers brought indentured labourers from South India to work on sugar plantations in South Africa. The Indian population in South Africa consisted of three categories: indentured Indian labourers, merchants, and ex-indentured labourers who settled in South Africa after their contracts expired. None of these groups had much access to education, especially English. They faced racial discrimination on a daily basis, and they had little idea of how to challenge it. Gandhi had never encountered racism in India or England, but upon his arrival in South Africa, it became a significant issue.

### ◆ *Racial humiliation faced by Gandhi in South Africa*

Racial humiliations marked Gandhi's journey from Durban to Pretoria. A White man dragged him out of a first-class compartment, leaving him in the cold throughout the night on the platform. He was forced to travel in the driver's box of a coach and was attacked after he ignored the coach leader's instruction to sit on the footboard. When he arrived in Johannesburg, he was refused lodging and was forced to leave again.

### ◆ *Gandhi's decision to stay in South Africa*

Upon arriving in Pretoria, he convened a meeting of Indians, offered to teach English, and encouraged them to protest against oppression. He aimed to raise a sense of dignity among Indians and persuade them to oppose all types of racial disabilities. Gandhi, after settling a lawsuit, prepared to leave for India. However, he raised the issue of a bill to disenfranchise Indians, which was being passed by the Natal legislature. Indians in South Africa requested Gandhiji to stay for a month to organise their protest, as they could not do so alone. Gandhiji agreed and ended up staying for twenty years.

### 3.1.1 Gandhian Experiments in South Africa Moderate Phase of Struggle (1894–1906)

Between 1894 and 1906, Gandhiji actively participated in the 'Moderate' phase of the struggle for the rights of South African Indians. He focused on petitioning and sending





◆ *Focusing on petitioning and sending memorials*

memorials to South African legislatures, the Colonial Secretary in London, and the British Parliament. He hoped that presenting the facts to the Imperial Government would arouse a British sense of justice and fair play, leading to intervention on behalf of Indians. He aimed to unite different sections of Indians and give their demands wide publicity through the organisation 'Natal Indian Congress' and the newspaper 'Indian Opinion'. Gandhiji's skills as an organiser, fundraiser, journalist, and propagandist were evident during this period. However, by 1906, he realised that these methods would not lead to success.

### **The phase of Passive Resistance or Satyagraha (1906–1914)**

◆ *Struggle against Registration Certificate*

Gandhiji coined the term 'Satyagraha' to describe the passive resistance or civil disobedience used during the second phase of the South African struggle that began in 1906. The practice originated when the government mandated that Indians obtain registration certificates with their fingerprints. It was necessary to keep these items on hand at all times. On September 11, 1906, Indians in Johannesburg decided not to cooperate with the law and face the consequences. The government remained steadfast, and Gandhiji established the 'Passive Resistance Association' to lead the campaign. Following the registration deadline, the government initiated proceedings against Gandhiji and twenty-six others. The passive resisters pleaded guilty, were ordered to leave the country, and sentenced to imprisonment.

◆ *Smuts misled Gandhiji*

General Jan Smuts, a South African statesman, summoned Gandhiji for talks, promising to withdraw legislation if Indians voluntarily registered. Gandhiji accepted and became the first to register. Smuts deceived Gandhiji by ordering voluntary registrations to be ratified by law, resulting in the public burning of registration certificates.

◆ *Campaign against Immigration rule*

The government introduced new legislation to restrict Indian immigration, leading to a wider campaign against it. In August 1908, prominent Indians from Natal and Transvaal crossed the border in defiance of the new immigration laws, leading to their arrest and imprisonment. Licensed traders also refused to sell their goods, resulting in their imprisonment as well. In October 1908, Gandhi and other Indians were imprisoned and subjected to harsh punishments. Despite their imprisonment, the government continued deportation to India. Additionally, threats to the

merchants' economic interests created significant pressure on them.

◆ *Establishment of Tolstoy Farm*

The Satyagrahis movement reached a deadlock, with the majority showing signs of fatigue and the government's reluctance to relent. Gandhiji's visit to London in 1909 to meet authorities produced little result, indicating a prolonged struggle and the need for a more focused approach. Funds to support the families of *Satyagrahis* and to sustain the publication of 'Indian Opinion' were nearly exhausted, and Gandhi's legal practice had virtually ended since 1906. To support these families, Gandhi, along with his German friend and architect Kallenbach, established 'Tolstoy Farm', which provided housing and sustenance for the Satyagrahis and their families.

◆ *Activities at Tolstoy Farm*

Gandhi founded the Tolstoy Farm, the second of its kind, in 1904, after the 'Phoenix Farm' in Natal. Inspired by John Ruskin's 'Unto This Last', the farm focused on manual work and instruction, introducing vocational training and co-educational classes. Activities included general labour, cooking, scavenging, sandal making, simple carpentry, and messenger work. Gandhi aimed to instil social service and citizenship ideals, as well as respect for manual work, from an early age. The farm operated until 1913. Tolstoy Farm, a forerunner to Gandhian *ashrams*, played a crucial role in the Indian national movement. The farm was funded primarily by Hermann Kallenbach and supported by the local Indian community in South Africa.

◆ *Visit of Gokhale*

In 1911, King George V's coronation coincided with an agreement between the government and the Indians, which lasted until 1912. During this period, Gokhale visited South Africa and assured the Indian community that the discriminatory laws against them would be repealed. However, this promise was not fulfilled, leading to the resumption of Satyagraha in 1913.

◆ *Expansion of satyagraha movement*

The Satyagraha movement broadened its focus to include resistance against the three-pound poll tax imposed on ex-indentured Indians, particularly targeting the poorest labourers. The demand for the abolition of this tax, which heavily burdened those with low wages, galvanised both indentured and ex-indentured labourers, turning the struggle into a widespread mass movement. The Supreme Court's decision to invalidate non-Christian marriages, including Hindu, Muslim, and Parsi ones, enraged Indians and non-Christians. This meant Hindu, Muslim, and Parsi marriages



were illegal, and children born from such marriages were illegitimate. Indians viewed this as an insult to women's honour, leading many women to join the movement.

♦ *Participation of women*

Gandhiji called on all agitators to channel their resources into a final struggle. The campaign began with the illegal border crossing by sixteen Satyagrahis, including Kasturba, who were arrested after marching from Phoenix Settlement to Transvaal. A group of eleven women from Tolstoy Farm in Transvaal crossed the border into Natal without permission. It reached New Castle, a mining town, where they persuaded Indian mine workers, primarily Tamils, to strike.

♦ *Agitation at New Castle*

Gandhiji organised an agitation in New Castle, where employers cut off utilities to workers' quarters, forcing them to leave their homes. He marched with an army of over two thousand men, women, and children across the border, resulting in their imprisonment in Transvaal jails. Gandhiji was arrested twice, released, and imprisoned for the third time. The workers in Natal continued their march until they were put into trains and sent back to Natal. They were prosecuted and sent to jail, where they faced harsh treatment, including starvation, whipping, and forced labour in mines.

♦ *Conclusion of the struggle*

The government's actions enraged the Indian community, resulting in a strike among plantation and mine workers. Gokhale toured India to arouse public opinion. Viceroy Lord Hardinge denounced the repression as unacceptable. He demanded an impartial inquiry into the atrocities, and the brutal force used against unarmed and peaceful individuals sparked widespread condemnation. After negotiations with Gandhiji, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, C.F. Andrews, and General Smuts, South Africa's government agreed to accept Indian demands for poll tax, registration certificates, and marriages solemnised according to Indian rites and promised to treat Indian immigration compassionately.

♦ *Gandhi returned to India*

Non-violent civil disobedience successfully compelled opponents to negotiate and concede the movement's demands. The 'Gandhian' method of struggle had evolved, and he returned to his homeland. The South African experiment was to be expanded to the Indian sub-continent on a larger scale.

### **Challenges and Triumphs: Gandhi's South African Chapter**

Gandhi's South African experience prepared him for leadership in the Indian national struggle, as he witnessed the sacrifices, hardships, and morale of poor Indian labourers

◆ *Developed new techniques of struggle*

amidst repression. Gandhi's belief in the ability of the Indian people to participate and sacrifice for a cause was reinforced in South Africa. Gandhiji led a diverse group of Indians, primarily Gujaratis and Tamils, from various religious and social backgrounds, including rich merchants and poor indentured labourers, in South Africa. South Africa gave Gandhiji the opportunity to develop his style in politics and leadership, experimenting with new techniques of struggle.

### 3.1.2 Gandhi in India

◆ *Return to India*

In 1915, Gandhiji returned to India and was warmly welcomed. His work in South Africa was well-known to educated Indians and the masses, who flocked to him for his principles. Gokhale praised him as being made of the stuff of heroes and martyrs. He applauded Gandhiji for his remarkable spiritual power, which enabled him to transform ordinary people into heroes and martyrs.

◆ *First year of Gandhi in India after South African struggle*

Gandhiji, following Gokhale's advice and his approach of meticulous study before interfering, decided not to take a public stance on any political issue for the first year. During the year, he travelled the country, organising his *ashram* in Ahmedabad and led a community life with his South African followers. The following year, he maintained a distance from political affairs, including the Home Rule Movement, which was gaining momentum. Gandhiji's political beliefs did not align with the current political trends in India at the time, as his faith in 'Moderate' methods was eroded, and he disagreed with the Home Rulers' belief that the best time to agitate for Home Rule was during the First World War.

◆ *Satyagraha as his method of struggle*

Gandhiji believed that all political struggles were ineffective and Satyagraha was the only feasible solution to the problem. He decided not to join existing organisations because his views were firmly established, and he could only align himself with groups or movements that embraced non-violent Satyagraha as their method of struggle. Gandhiji, despite his political idleness, participated in three significant struggles in 1917 and early 1918: Champaran in Bihar, Kheda in Gujarat and Ahmedabad. These struggles focused on local issues and aimed to meet the economic demands of the masses. The Champaran and Kheda struggles involved peasants, while the Ahmedabad involved industrial workers.

#### 3.1.2.1 Experiments- Early Satyagrahas in India

##### 1. Champaran Satyagraha

Champaran's issue began in the early 19th century when





◆ *Issues faced by cultivators of Champaran*

European planters forced cultivators to cultivate indigo on three-twentieth of their holdings, known as the *tinkathia* system. In the late 19th century, German synthetic dyes forced indigo out of the market, leading European planters of Champaran to release cultivators from their obligation by securing rent increases and other illegal dues as a price for their release. In 1908, resistance against planters continued, prompting Raj Kumar Shukla, a local man, to follow Gandhiji across the country and persuade him to look into the issue in Champaran in Bihar. Raj Kumar Shukla's decision to bring Gandhiji to Champaran reflects his popularity as a champion of the rights of the exploited and poor.

◆ *Gandhi at Champaran*

When Gandhiji arrived in Champaran, the Commissioner ordered him to leave the district, but he refused, preferring to face the consequences of his defiance of the law. Tilak and Annie Besant, even though they were from the same province, obeyed orders despite organising public protests against them, demonstrating the novelty of passive resistance or civil disobedience to an unjust order. The Indian government, unwilling to stir up tensions and unaccustomed to treating Gandhiji as a rebel, ordered the local government to retreat and permit Gandhiji to conduct his investigation.

◆ *Gandhi's interference in the Movement*

◆ *Champaran- First Civil Disobedience Movement*

Gandhiji, along with his colleagues, including Brij Kishore, Rajendra Prasad, Mazharul-Haq, Mahadev Desai, Narhari Parikh, and J.B. Kripalani, investigated peasant grievances. They toured villages, recorded peasant statements, and interrogated them to ensure accurate information. The government appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the *tinkathia* system, with Gandhiji as a member. With evidence from 8,000 peasants, Gandhiji persuaded the Commission to abolish the system and compensate peasants for illegally increasing their dues. In a compromise with the planters, he agreed to pay them 25 percent of the money taken. He argued that this had damaged their prestige and position, and within a decade, the planters left the district, confirming Gandhiji's assessment. He won the first battle of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Raj Kishore Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Ramnavmi Prasad, and Shambhusharan Varma were also prominent leaders who participated in Champaran Satyagraha.

## 2.Ahmedabad Mill Strike

In 1918, Gandhiji intervened in a dispute between cotton mill owners in Ahmedabad and workers over the



◆ *Problems faced by the workers of Ahmedabad mill*

discontinuation of the plague bonus. Employers wanted to withdraw after the epidemic, but workers remained, as the bonus wasn't sufficient to meet the cost of living during the war. Workers demanded a 50 percent wage increase to manage wartime inflation caused by Britain's involvement in World War I. Mill owners offered only a 20 percent wage increase, which led to a strike. The British Collector, fearing a confrontation, requested Gandhiji to pressure mill owners, including Ambalal Sarabhai, who was a friend of Gandhiji and had saved the Sabarmati Ashram from extinction through a generous donation, to work out a compromise. Gandhiji convinced mill owners and workers to negotiate mediation through a tribunal, but the owners, exploiting a stray strike, withdrew from the agreement. The company offered a 20 percent bonus and threatened to dismiss those who refused to accept it.

◆ *Gandhi's leadership*

Gandhiji viewed the violation of the agreement as a serious issue and advised workers to strike. He suggested that after analysing production costs, profits, and living costs, they should demand a 35 percent wage increase based on a thorough analysis. Gandhiji initiated a strike on the Sabarmati River, addressing workers every day and promoting non-violent resistance against employers. Anasuya Behn, Ambalal Sarabhai's sister, was a key lieutenant, while her brother, a friend of Gandhiji, was a major opponent.

◆ *First Hunger Strike*

Workers began to show signs of weariness and lowered attendance at daily meetings, resulting in a hardened attitude toward employers. Gandhiji decided to go on a fast to unite the workers and strengthen their resolve to succeed. He promised to be the first to starve if the strike resulted in starvation. The fast also put pressure on mill owners, who agreed to submit the issue to a tribunal. The strike was called off, and the tribunal awarded the workers a 35 percent wage increase.

### 3. Kheda Satyagraha

◆ *First peasant satyagraha*

The initiative for the 'no-revenue' campaign, aimed at pressuring for remissions in the context of poor harvest, originated from local village leaders like Mohanlal Pandya in November 1917 and was taken up by Gandhi on 22 March 1918 after considerable deliberation. Kheda, the first Gandhian peasant satyagraha in India, built a solid Gandhian base in Gujarat, particularly in the Anand and Borsad talukas of Kheda and Charotar tract of Kheda and Bardoli taluka of Surat.



◆ *Difficulty confronted by the farmers*

In 1918, drought in the Kheda district of Gujarat led to crop failures, allowing farmers to claim remission under the Revenue Code. The Gujarat Sabha petitioned to suspend the revenue assessment for 1919, but the government refused, threatening to seize farmers' property if taxes were not paid. Members of the Servants of India Society, Vithalbhai Patel and Gandhiji, examined the peasants' case. They confirmed its validity, stating that due to crops yielding less than one-fourth of normal, they were entitled to full land revenue remission under the revenue code.

◆ *Involvement of Gandhiji*

The Gujarat Sabha, led by Gandhiji, played a significant role in the agitation against the government's tyranny. After unsuccessful appeals and petitions, Gandhiji advised withholding revenue and urged peasants to fight against the government's vindictiveness. Vallabhai Patel, a young lawyer from the Kheda district, and others, including Indulal Yagnik, accompanied Gandhiji in touring villages and urging peasants to stand firm against government repression, including the seizure of cattle and household goods.

◆ *Success of Gandhian Struggle*

◆ *First Non-Cooperation*

Cultivators were asked to pledge not to pay, while those who could afford to pay pledged not to support the poorer ryots who would sell their belongings or incur debts to pay the revenue. If the government agreed to suspend land revenue collection, those who could afford it could pay the entire amount. The peasants of Kheda were struggling due to plague, high prices, and drought. Gandhiji learned that the government had issued secret instructions directing revenue recovery only to those who could pay, which would have weakened the image of the government. As a result, the movement was withdrawn. Gandhi's intervention in Kheda Satyagraha resulted in long-term success.

◆ *Gandhi as a National leader*

Gandhiji's political style became apparent in Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda, which helped him establish himself among the Indian population and understand their issues. Through these experiences, he gained a deeper understanding of the masses' strengths and weaknesses. He earned the respect and commitment of many political workers, particularly younger ones, who were impressed by his identification with the problems of ordinary Indians and his willingness to take up their cause.

### 3.1.3 Ideas of struggle

Gandhian ideology is a set of religious and social ideas developed by Mahatma Gandhi, first in South Africa and then

◆ **Gandhian ideology**

in India. It is a combination of political, moral, and religious aspects, rooted in ancient Indian culture and influenced by Western thoughts. The philosophy encompasses spiritual, moral, political, economic, social, individual, and collective aspects, encompassing various levels. Gandhian ideology illustrates practical idealism, aiming to transform individuals and society through truth and non-violence.. It was developed by Mahatma Gandhi from various sources, including *Bhagavad Gita*, Jainism, Buddhism, and *Bible*. He was deeply influenced by the thoughts of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Tolstoy, and John Ruskin. Tolstoy's book 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' had a significant impact on Gandhi, who translated Ruskin's book 'Unto This Last' as 'Sarvodaya'.

◆ **Meaning of Truth and Non-violence**

### 3.1.3.1 Truth and Non violence

Gandhian thoughts emphasise truth and nonviolence as the twin cardinal principles. Truth is relative truth, while absolute truth is the ultimate reality, based on God and morality, which are both truthful in word and deed. Mahatma Gandhi views nonviolence as active love, the opposite of violence, and considers it the highest law of humanity, as it transcends peacefulness and open violence.

#### (i) Satyagraha

◆ **Concept of Satyagraha**

Satyagraha is a combination of the words satya (truth) and agraha (adherence, holding fast), which means "holding on to truth." It was an alternative for what Gandhi originally referred to as 'passive resistance'. 'Passive Resistance' focuses on the use of physical force and violence for personal gain, whereas Satyagraha is viewed as a weapon of the strongest, excluding all forms of violence. Passive resistance excludes love, whereas Satyagraha represents love for all. Satyagrahi, a concept involving self-sufficiency, seeks to convert opponents through trust in human nature and goodness, aiming to pit one soul against the will of the tyrant, rather than seeking submission to evil-doers. Gandhi believed that Satyagraha, a moral religion, aimed to elevate political warfare beyond physical weapons. He emphasised that non-violence was meant for the common people, not just rishis and saints. Satyagraha had two offshoots: non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

*Satyagraha*, aimed to achieve social and political change by promoting nonviolent resistance through strength and bravery. The movement involved a combination of tactics

◆ Objectives of Satyagraha

such as positive resistance, persuasion, and adjustment, as well as propaganda and education. The movement was constantly reassessed and adjusted to suit the situation. *Satyagraha* was progressive in its progression, with direct action only launched after all other efforts had been exhausted. The moral and discipline of the *Satyagrahis* were maintained, and the goal was to win over the opponent, demonstrating sincerity and achieving an agreement. *Satyagraha* was not just a table talk but a practical philosophy of actions that shaped the idea of human unity.

◆ Gandhian concept of truth

Satyagraha, translated as 'insistence on truth', is a philosophy characterised by Gandhiji as 'Love Force' or 'Soul Force'. Gandhiji believed that violence is inconsistent with truth and should be replaced with patience and sympathy. This doctrine, which equates suffering with truth, was known as 'the vindication of truth, not by causing suffering on the opponent but on oneself.' Satyagraha asserts that the world is built on *Satya*, meaning truth, which is unchanging and *asatya*, meaning untruth, signifies non-existence. *Satyagraha* is a social change technique that excludes violence, promotes modesty, peace, and love, encourages reasoned obedience and respectful disobedience, and encourages self-suffering for self-purification and awakening the higher self. It emphasises redemption, non-violence for wrongdoing, and the sacredness of all life. *Satyagrahi* aims for love over hatred and results in maximum good for both the protagonist and opponent, as it is a movement of self-purification.

◆ Satyagraha became a key elements in India's freedom struggle

Satyagraha, a new principle and technique that Gandhi successfully implemented in South Africa, has been the dominant element in India's freedom struggle since 1919. Satyagraha is a complex concept combining philosophical, ethical, and mystic elements, which is challenging for those unfamiliar with the principle and its practice. Its final form emerged from Gandhi's gradual evolution over thirty years, as he emphasised it in various ways in his writings, speeches, and actions. Gandhi initially called his South African movement "Passive Resistance", but later used the term Satyagraha, in order to stress the distinction between his movement and Passive Resistance.

Gandhi emphasised non-violence as the foundation of *Satyagraha*, stating that a person who claims to be non-violent is expected to not be angry, wish harm, wish well, swear at, or cause physical harm to the wrongdoer. This form of non-violence is considered complete innocence, and it is a complete

◆ *Concept of Non-violence*

absence of ill will against all living beings. *Satyagraha* is a law of love that avoids violence and all forms of aggression. It aims to convert opponents through sympathy, patience, and self-suffering, rather than destruction or harassment. *Satyagraha* is based on infinite trust in human nature and its inherent goodness. Gandhi emphasised the importance of non-violence as the law of our species, not just for rishis and saints. He argued that the high ideal of *Satyagraha* could be practiced by the common people for political ends, stating that non-violence is the law of our species, not just the law of the brute.

◆ *Offshoots of Satyagraha*

◆ *Experiment of satyagraha in India*

Gandhi referred to non-cooperation and civil resistance or Civil Disobedience as two offshoots of *Satyagraha*. At the same time, other forms include hartal, purificatory fasts, picketing, non-violent raids, marches, and fasting, either for a short period or unto death. In 1915, when he arrived in India, Gandhi realised he was a misfit in politics and accepted Gokhale as his political guru. Gokhale was impressed by Gandhi's liberal humanism and wanted to admit him to the Servants of India Society. However, other members disagreed due to their differing methods and ideals. Gandhi set up an *Ashram* in Ahmedabad in 1915 to introduce India to the *Satyagraha* method, aiming to familiarise the country with the idea of *satyagraha*. The Champaran *Satyagraha* marked the initial triumph of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* movement in India. Later, in Kheda and Ahmedabad, he became a success.

**(ii) Fasting**

◆ *Gandhian meaning of 'Fasting'*

Mahatma Gandhi, who embarked on a fast unto death, was accused by the British of being blackmail. However, Gandhi argued that it was 'voluntary crucifixion of flesh, driven by love for his fellow Indians'. He aimed to bring them back to sanity by urging them to stop using violence and killing each other. Gandhi believed that fasting unto death was only applicable to those he loved and those who loved him, and should not be a form of moral blackmail. He believed that it was a way to evoke the best in others and not to force them to do something for him.

**3.1.3.2 Non-Cooperation**

◆ *Significance of Non-Cooperation*

Cooperation is crucial for success, and even the strongest government can collapse if people stop cooperating. Non-cooperation can lead to the stopping of cooperation, resulting in the despotic force's power being lost. Therefore, even the most despotic government requires cooperation in order to function effectively. Fasting, a powerful form of non-





cooperation, aims to purify oneself and convince opponents. It should be offered when one is convinced of their rightness, after all other methods have failed, and as a last resort, never for personal gain. It should be a prayer for purity, strength, and power from God.

◆ *Not to cooperate with the wrong system*

Non-cooperation refers to the rejection of benefits associated with a system, aiming to awaken the masses to their dignity and power. It involves understanding one's inner soul and recognising that brute force is unnecessary if one can understand one's inner self. Mahatma Gandhi believed that every individual should participate in politics and law-making for societal well-being. He believed that individuals should differentiate between just and unjust laws and cooperate with the just one, not with the unjust one. Gandhi believed that the success of any evil system depends on the cooperation of sufferers, so the main idea behind non-cooperation was not to cooperate with the evil system.

◆ *Gandhian notion of Non-Cooperation*

Non-cooperation from the nation signals that it is no longer satisfied to be in teaching. It aims to make opponents realise that people prefer governments based on non-violence, justice, peace, and equality. This non-cooperation is a sign of the nation's dissatisfaction with the government's rule. Mahatma Gandhi believed that non-cooperation can lead to self-purification by withdrawing cooperation from an unrighteous and unrepentant government. This can arouse a sense of consciousness in the evil doer, helping them transform. Non-cooperation also makes the non-cooperator self-reliant by not accepting help from unjust sources. The primary motive of non-cooperation is to read ourselves of helplessness by being independent of government control or supervision, governing ourselves in all possible affairs, and refraining from causing injury or violence to individuals or property.

◆ *Cooperation with truth and justice*

Mahatma Gandhi emphasised non-co-operation as an active, non-violent state, not passive like physical resistance or violence. He believed that non-violence was necessary for moral strength and the transformation of evildoers without antagonism. Non-cooperation was a measure of self-sacrifice, aiming to solve conflicts through peace and non-violence. Gandhi emphasised that non-cooperation is a means to secure cooperation with truth and justice.

Nonviolent noncooperation methods included boycotts of British government institutions, foreign clothes, schools,

◆ *Non-violent non-cooperation*

courts, and other activities. Mahatma Gandhi saw strikes as a spiritual weapon for self-purification, while hartal, or disapproval of work, should be peaceful. Picketing was a form of protest where picketers gather outside a workplace to draw public attention and discourage customers and workers, thereby hampering normal operations. These nonviolent activities aimed to transform opponents through persuasion.

◆ *Methods of Non-cooperation*  
◆ *Boycott*

In 1920-21, nonviolent protests against liquor, opium, and foreign clothes were often used, while social shunning was employed to exclude British groups and councils. Mahatma Gandhi adopted the boycott strategy during the Non-Cooperation movement, rejecting all institutions of the British Empire, stating that the only reason they existed was because the Indian people collaborated with them. The lack of support by the colonial administration led to the emergence of non-cooperation movements in India, which eventually evolved into civil disobedience, a form of *Satyagraha*. Mahatma Gandhi argued in 1930 that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-cooperation.

### 3.1.3.3 Civil Disobedience

◆ *Gandhi was influenced by the Thoreau concept of Civil disobedience*

Civil disobedience, a form of non-cooperation against British rule, was the last major uprising against the British. It consisted of nonviolent violations of immoral statutory enactments and institutions. Henry David Thoreau coined the term in 1849 in his essay "Duty of Civil Disobedience", which had a strong influence on Mahatma Gandhi. Thoreau believed that the government was the most corrupt institution, prompting honest men to rebel and revolutionise. He believed that government is best when it governs the least and that people should withdraw their support from it. He adopted the technique of non-payment of taxes. He believed that a truly free and enlightened state would only exist when the state recognised individuals as higher and independent powers.

◆ *Gandhian idea of Civil disobedience*

Mahatma Gandhi, inspired by Thoreau, aimed to develop civil disobedience as a political and social action. He believed it was an effective and non-violent substitute for armed revolt, requiring the Satyagrahis to avoid violence and be prepared for extreme suffering. He emphasised the need for restrictions and limited scope to prevent violence or lawlessness. Gandhiji argued that individuals should obey laws only if their conscience allows it and justified disobedience by claiming it



was their natural right to disobey unjust laws. Understanding successful civil resistance is crucial for launching large-scale initiatives. The quickest remedies are often dangerous and require skill in handling them. A successful boycott of foreign cloth can create an atmosphere for civil disobedience that no government can resist.

♦ *Violation of law*

In 'Hind Swaraj', Gandhi stated that obeying laws that violate our conscience is against our manhood. Such teaching stands in sharp contrast to religion and represents slavery. As a result, the primary goal of civil disobedience was to raise public awareness of the government's unjust attitude and freeze it. Mahatma Gandhi further quoted in 'Young India' that, —Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion- a refusal to obey every single state made by law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed rebellion, for it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardship. It is based upon an implicit belief in the absolute efficacy of innocent suffering.

♦ *Gandhi's response to the critics*

Critics have criticised civil disobedience as a method of intentionally violating valid and legal laws. Mahatma Gandhi, however, argued that civil disobedience is a recognised legal procedure for challenging laws or policies, recognising the propriety of nonviolent challenges and that the obligation to obey the law is relative. He suggested that protest and civil disobedience should receive protection under the First Amendment and that the punishment should be nominal and not more severe.

## Summarised Overview

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, an Indian barrister, arrived in South Africa in 1893 to resolve the legal issues of Gujarati merchant Dada Abdullah. Indian immigration to South Africa began in the 19th century, with indentured Indian labourers, merchants, and ex-indentured labourers who lacked access to education, especially English. Racial discrimination was a significant issue for these groups as society in South Africa was heavily segregated. Gandhi faced racial humiliation in South Africa and witnessed the brutal racism and humiliation faced by Asian labourers. He decided to stay and organise Indian workers for their rights, staying until 1914 before returning to India. Gandhi used petitions, prayers, and memorials to inform South Africa and Britain about Indians' grievances, hoping that they would address them. To unite different sections, he established the Natal Indian Congress and started Indian Opinion, aiming to redress grievances. In 1906, Gandhi initiated a campaign called *Satyagraha*, a passive resistance technique. The

campaign aimed to defy South Africa's registration certificate laws, which made Indians carry passes. The government jailed Gandhi and others who refused to register, leading to public outrage. The campaign also aimed to abolish the poll tax and validate Indian marriages. Eventually, negotiations resulted in an agreement with the administration, prompting the administration to address key Indian demands and adopt a more equitable approach towards Indian immigration.

In 1915, Gandhi returned to India after his successful efforts in South Africa. He decided to tour the country and not take any political stance for a year. He believed moderate politics were limited and opposed Home Rule agitation. Gandhi believed non-violent satyagraha was the only technique for meeting nationalist aims. He participated in three struggles in Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda in 1917 and 1918. Gandhi effectively utilised satyagraha, gained a deeper understanding of the masses' strengths and weaknesses, and gained the respect and commitment of many, particularly the youth, by demonstrating the effectiveness of his technique. Satyagraha, a social change technique, emphasises the importance of truth, non-violence, and self-suffering. Gandhi's concept of 'Love Force' or 'Soul Force' (Satyagraha) emphasises nonviolent resistance and the power of truth, aiming to transform adversaries through love and moral integrity rather than through force or coercion. Gandhi, an advocate for non-violence, rejected violent methods such as armed uprisings and guerilla warfare. He believed that violence was not a solution to India's problems and that the means to achieve *Swaraj* should align with the country's cultural heritage. Gandhi emphasised civil disobedience as a non-violent technique to fight against unjust laws. It involves negotiation and demonstration, and if negotiation fails, disobedience. Gandhi believed complete civil disobedience is a peaceful rebellion, more effective than armed rebellion, and must be open to all and sans violence.

## Assignments

1. Explain different phases of Gandhian struggles in South Africa.
2. Describe the significance of Champaran Satyagraha in Bihar.
3. Evaluate the role of Gandhiji and Vallabhai Patel in organising the Kheda Satyagraha.
4. Write a short note on the Ahmedabad Mill worker's strike.
5. Analyse the Gandhian ideas of Struggle. Discuss Mahatma Gandhi's concept of "Satyagraha" as a method of nonviolent resistance.



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8. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *An Autobiography*, Teen Murti House, Delhi, 1936.
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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





## Towards Non-Cooperation

### Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ analyse the Rowlatt Act and the protest that happened against the Act
- ◆ describe the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and its impact on Indian National Movement
- ◆ examine how the Khilafat Movement and Non-Co operation Movement helped to cement the unity of Hindus and Muslims
- ◆ understand the factors that led to the suspension of Non-Cooperation Movement and criticism against the suspension

### Background

During 1919-22, in India, the British were opposed through two mass movements, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation, which adopted a common non-violent non-cooperation programme. The Khilafat issue, not directly related to Indian politics, provided the background and strengthened Hindu-Muslim unity against the British. Economic hardship, the Rowlatt Act, and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, which left a deep impact on the nation, all contributed to Indian discontent following World War I. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 failed to meet India's demand for self-government. The Lucknow Pact and Rowlatt Act agitation brought Hindus and Muslims together, with radical nationalist promoting militant nationalism and anti-imperialist sentiments. This gave rise to the Khilafat issue and the Non-Cooperation Movement. During this period, Gandhiji emerged as a mass leader. He launched a national protest against the Rowlatt Act and organised Satyagraha Sabha, which involved all sections of the people. His method of protests included nationwide hartal, fasting, prayers, civil disobedience against specific laws, and the possibility of arrest and imprisonment. In this unit, we analyse the course and effect of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement. We also discuss the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the Chauri- Chaura incident and the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement.



## Keywords

Rowlatt Act, Khilafat, Jallianwala Bagh, Boycott, Non- Cooperation, Chauri-Chaura

## Discussion

### ◆ Committee to investigate the revolutionary activities

Lord Chelmsford appointed a committee to investigate the rise of the revolutionary movement in India. He also recommended necessary legislation to suppress it. Following this, Lord Minto and Lord Hardinge introduced a policy of reform and repression. The committee presided over by Justice Rowlatt, consisted of four members, two Indians and two British officials in India. The Committee provided a comprehensive account of India's revolutionary movement based on materials provided by the Government of India. The legislation recommended was based on the draft prepared by the same Government to replace the Defence of India Act, which would cease operation after World War I. After a thorough survey of the revolutionary movement, the Committee recommended special legislation to curtail people's liberty severely. Two Bills were prepared based on these recommendations, aiming to restrict the freedom of the people.

### 3.2.1 Rowlatt Act

### ◆ Provisions of Rowlatt Act

The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, popularly known as the Rowlatt Act, established a Special Court composed of three High Court Judges to expedite the trial of offences. There was no appeal from this decision, which allowed for the consideration of evidence that was not permissible under the Indian Evidence Act. Under this act, the Provincial Government has the authority to order individuals suspected of a crime to provide security, notify their residence, reside in a specific area, abstain from certain actions, or report themselves to the police. They can also search a place, arrest a suspect without a warrant, and confine them under specific conditions and restrictions.

The Bill was opposed by Indians of all political backgrounds, arguing that it was unwise to introduce it during a time of peace and declining revolutionary crimes, as it would likely destroy the chance of constitutional reforms improving the political situation in India and that it was not suitable

legislation. The government claimed that although there was an unarmed uprising in India, the underground revolutionary movement was still active and had not been completely put down. Revolutionary crimes in India increased after the withdrawal of coercive legislation, indicating an undeclared war against British rule.

◆ *Protest against the Bill*

◆ *Satyagraha Sabha was formed*

Several public meetings were held to protest against a lawless law, with all non-official Indian members of the Indian Legislative Council opposing it. Four members resigned as a protest, a unique opposition since the Partition of Bengal. Gandhi convened a conference with twenty attendees, including Vallabhbhai Patel and Sarojini Naidu, where the *Satyagraha* pledge was drafted and signed on 24 February 1919. Satyagraha Sabha, a separate body, was established with Bombay as its headquarters and Gandhiji as its President. Public meetings and bulletins were issued, and more people signed the *Satyagraha* pledge. Gandhiji proposed a general hartal and observed fasting and prayer as a preliminary to *Satyagraha*, a process of self-purification. Rajagopalachari and others supported the idea, leading Gandhi to draft an appeal. The hartal date was initially set for March 30, 1919, but was later changed to April 6, 1919. It began in Delhi on March 30, the originally scheduled date, because the notice of change arrived late.

◆ *Hartal on April 6*

Police firing disrupted a successful procession, causing casualties. Similar incidents occurred in Lahore and Amritsar, prompting Gandhi to visit these areas urgently. The hartal, on April 6, 1919, formally accepted Gandhiji as the all-India leader. Gandhiji's leadership was tested during the upheaval following his call to observe hartal in India on April 6, 1919. Reports of successful hartals came from various sources, with some being typical, such as Gandhi's presence in Bombay, where the hartal was a complete success.

◆ *Beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement*

Thousands of people marched to Thakurdwar, Mumbai, after a sea bath at Ghaupatty, and large numbers of Muslims joined. They took Hindu leaders to a mosque, where Mrs. Naidu and Gandhi delivered speeches. The Bombay Hartal marked the beginning of the Civil Disobedience movement through the sale of two banned books by Gandhi, which were sold quickly.

The hartal in Delhi, which took place on March 30, was marred by clashes between police and protesters, with the military firing into the crowd, resulting in several deaths and

◆ *Clashes between police and protesters*

injuries. On April 6, Delhi witnessed another hartal with over 10,000 people and eight meetings. Popular excitement in Delhi and Amritsar led local leaders to invite Gandhi and his presence to appease the people. However, the government disagreed.

◆ *Gandhi's arrest and riot at Pydhonie*

On April 7, 1919, Gandhi travelled to Delhi and Amritsar. He was stopped at Palwal Station, Haryana, and he was ordered not to enter the Punjab's boundary due to the possibility of causing trouble, but he refused to leave. He was arrested and taken to Bombay on 10 April 1919. After being released, he was informed that his arrest caused a riot in Pydhonie, south Bombay, where police killed and injured protesters.

◆ *Protests in Ahmedabad*

Rumours about Gandhiji and Anasuya Behn's arrest sparked protests in Ahmedabad. Mill workers were angry, leading to violence and a policeman's death. The city was put under martial law. With government permission, he convened a public meeting to address the people's wrongs and declared a remorseful fast. He appealed for a fast and asked those involved to confess their guilt. Despite no response, however, the peace was restored. Bipan Chandra stated that two officials and 28 people were killed and 123 wounded in a riot in Ahmedabad.

◆ *Gandhi realised Indians were not yet ready to follow Satyagraha*

Gandhi left Ahmedabad for Nadiad, Gujarat. Upon arrival in Nadiad, he recognised that he had made a major mistake in his call for a Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhi realised that a *Satyagrahi* should strictly adhere to all laws and ethical principles before engaging in civil disobedience. He believed that no one had the right to adopt Satyagraha without thoroughly qualifying themselves. This led Gandhi to accuse himself of a 'Himalayan miscalculation', as he failed to observe the necessary limitations for adopting Satyagraha.

◆ *Suspension of Civil Disobedience*

Gandhiji suspended the Civil Disobedience movement and established a volunteer corps in Bombay, promoting Satyagraha. However, the peaceful nature of Satyagraha proved unpopular, leading to a decline in the number of volunteers. Many were disappointed with Gandhi's decision to suspend the movement, arguing that mass Satyagraha would be unfeasible if complete peace were seen as a prerequisite. Gandhi then urged leaders to uphold a limited stance of non-violence.

Punjab, which was experiencing severe wartime





♦ *Inhuman activities of Michael O'Dyer*

repression, reacted strongly, making the situation in Amritsar and Lahore dangerous for the government. Bombay and Gujarat, including Ahmedabad, were in flames, prompting the Governor to stay and calm the people. Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O'Dyer's cruel recruiting campaigns, suppression of the people, and insults to the educated classes infuriated the Punjab Province. He imprisoned hundreds of local men, banned the vernacular press, and forcibly recruited men for the army, and this sparked popular resentment. Following the hartal on April 6, 1919, Punjab experienced a significant rebellion, and the authorities took unprecedented measures against the people of Punjab.

### 3.2.1.1 Amritsar Tragedy

♦ *Deportation of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew*

The hartals on March 30 and 6 April 1919 were successful. The Ramnavami festival procession also went smoothly, with the Deputy Commissioner stating that the people peacefully participated. The Congress Committee questioned whether O'Dyer incited violence to crush the people. On 9th April, O'Dyer's Government ordered the deportation of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew, who were taken from their homes. The news spread, leading to a large crowd of demonstrators marching through Amritsar's main streets to plead for their release. Many farmers attended a cattle and horse fair in Amritsar, and after hearing about Gandhiji's forced repatriation from the Punjab borders by the government, they joined the demonstration.

♦ *Acts of violence*

Despite causing disturbances, the crowd marched peacefully, not molesting or noticing Europeans. However, they were stopped at the Hall Gate Bridge, where, despite being unarmed, several people were killed and injured. The crowd rushed back to the city. The violent mob in the city engaged in brutal acts of violence, killing five Europeans and destroying several public buildings, including the telephone exchange, two banks, the Town Hall, and the Indian Christian Church. Three officials of the National Bank and Chartered Bank were killed. A missionary doctor, Miss Sherwood, was set on fire by the mob, and she was left unconscious. The crowd attempted to cross the Hall Gate Bridge, resulting in twenty to thirty casualties. Telegraph wires were cut, and two railway stations were attacked outside the city.

According to the official report, the mob violence began with unnecessary firing on the crowd at the Hall Gate Bridge, which resulted in the deaths and injuries of peaceful protesters. This contradicts the government's claim that the

◆ *Records regarding the reason for violence*

violence was a conspiracy to overthrow the government's rule. On April 11, a funeral procession carried the bodies of police firing victims. However, Brigadier General Dyer arrived on April 11, 1919, taking command of the troops and assuming the city was under Martial Law, which was not officially declared until April 15. The report admits that de facto martial law existed in Lahore.

◆ *Jallianwala Bagh massacre*

General Dyer began his administration with widespread arrests and a proclamation banning all gatherings. However, the declaration was not communicated effectively throughout the city, leading to a public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh on Baisakhi Day, April 13, 1919; frustrated by the disobedience of his orders, General Dyer ordered his troops to fire upon the unarmed crowd. General Dyer did not issue a warning to the people. When the people peacefully gathered at Jallianwala Bagh, the British troops started firing. The ground was completely surrounded by high walls, making the escape difficult for the people. The government estimated 379 dead in the incident, but other estimates were significantly higher.



Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Memorial

◆ *Views against General Dyer*

The brutality at Jallianwala Bagh shocked the nation, leading to intensified repression in Punjab and Amritsar. In protest, Rabindranath Tagore gave up his knighthood. Gandhi renounced his title of *Kaiser-i-Hind*, which had been granted to him by the British for his services in the Boer War. The people faced severe humiliation, leading Gandhi to withdraw from the movement on April 18, overwhelmed by the escalating violence. Dyer's actions received support from both the colonial Government and some segments of the British public. However, C. F. Andrews condemned Dyer's actions as "a cold and calculated massacre," calling them unjust, unpardonable, and inexcusable. Martial Law was imposed in Amritsar and five districts in Punjab, but it was later lifted on June 11, except for railway lands.

◆ *Bipan Chandra: "The Mahatma's 'Indian Experiment' had begun"*

Gandhi remained confident in his method of non-violent Satyagraha and the ability of the Indian people to use it as a means of struggle. A year later, he launched a mass national struggle against the injustices inflicted upon Punjab.

### 3.2.2 Khilafat Issue

◆ *Reasons for discontent in India against the British government*

The Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and Punjab's martial law all contributed to discontent in India in the late twentieth century. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, introduced in 1919, faced criticism for their dyarchical system, which divided administration between British officials and elected Indian ministers. These reforms also fell short of fulfilling promises for substantial post-war reforms, particularly in the context of anticipated concessions to Turkey. Muslims, who saw the Caliph of Turkey as their spiritual leader, were upset when he lost control of the holy sites that he was meant to protect during the First World War. Even those who considered the incidents at Jallianwala Bagh as aberrations were disillusioned when they discovered the Hunter Committee was a sham. The House of Lords voted in support of General Dyer's action, and the British public supported Dyer by collecting 30,000 pounds for him.

◆ *Formation of Khilafat Committee*

In India, Muslims demanded the restoration of the Caliph's control over Islamic sacred sites and sufficient territories after territorial arrangements. In early 1919, a Khilafat Committee was formed under the leadership of the Ali brothers, Shaukat Ali and Muhammad Ali, Maulana Azad, Ajmal Khan, and Hasrat Mohani. The Committee forced the British government to change its attitude towards Turkey, preparing the ground for a country-wide agitation.



◆ *Cease cooperation with the government*

Khilafat leaders initially focused on meetings, petitions, and deputations in favour of the Caliph. However, a militant trend emerged during this period, which demanded active agitation against the British and non-cooperation with the British. At the All-India Khilafat Conference in Delhi in November 1919, a call was made for boycotting British goods. They also stated that unless peace terms were favourable to Turkey, they would cease cooperation with the Government. Gandhi saw this as an opportunity for mass non-cooperation against the Government.

◆ *Delegation to the Government*

The release of the Ali Brothers from prison on the eve of the Indian National Congress session in December 1919 boosted the Khilafat agitation. Congressmen and Khilafatists discussed the issue, and it was decided to organise the Khilafat activities under Gandhiji's guidance, providing full support to the cause. The All-India Khilafat Conference in Amritsar agreed to send a deputation to the Viceroy, representing Hindus and Muslims. The delegation, signed by prominent leaders like Gandhi, Swami Shraddhananda, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, emphasised the need for acceptance of Muslims' demands. The Viceroy and Secretary of State stressed the importance of considering Muslim sentiment in India's decision-making. The Viceroy expressed concern that the Allied Powers in the Conference would not recognise Turkey's claim to have maintained its sovereignty and dominions prior to the war. He argued that Turkey, like any other power that supported Germany, could not expect to escape the consequences of her actions.

◆ *Doctrine of Nonviolent non-co-operation*

The Khilafat League sent deputations to England, Hedjaj, Nezd, Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Mesopotamia, but without success. The final decisions on Turkey were announced in a Government of India report in May 1920. Lloyd George's response to the Khilafat deputation in India on March 17 sparked a stir in the sentiment, leading to 19th March being designated as a day of national mourning. Gandhi issued a Manifesto on March 10, outlining his doctrine of Nonviolent non-co-operation, which would later play a dominant role in Indian politics. He ruled out the violent method of warfare and emphasised non-cooperation as the only remedy.

In 1920, the British Government's excuses were fading, and the Khilafat leaders were warned not to expect more. The Treaty of Sevres signed with Turkey in May 1920 confirmed the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire.



◆ *Gandhiji's leadership*

Gandhiji, who had been close to the Khilafat leaders and was a special invitee to the Khilafat Conference in November 1919, was sympathetic to their cause and suggested the Khilafat Committee adopt a non-violent non-cooperation programme to protest the government's attitude. On June 9, 1920, the Khilafat Committee unanimously accepted the suggestion and asked Gandhiji to lead the movement. Gandhiji decided to support the movement by launching a satyagraha movement against the government, but Congress, however, disagreed with this political move. Tilak opposed alliances with Muslim leaders and doubted satyagraha as a political instrument.

### 3.2.3 Non-Cooperation Movement

◆ *Congress's decision to start the Non-Cooperation Movement*

Gandhiji considered the Khilafat issue an opportunity to launch the non-cooperation movement against the British. He outlined the course of the movement, stating that those holding offices of honour or emoluments should give up their service and that non-cooperation should not apply to individuals. The movement merged into a larger political struggle, outstripping its original limitations. The Congress, dubious of constitutional political progress, agreed to consider non-cooperation in response to the Hunter Committee Report's appraisal of Punjab's brutalities. In May 1920, the AICC held a special session to allow Congress to decide on its next steps. People were outraged by the British government's insults and economic distress, and they demanded action. The nationalist leadership's propaganda raises political awareness. Economic distress affected various sections of society, including workers, artisans, lower middle and middle classes, the rural poor, and peasants, who suffered from high prices, food shortages, drought, and epidemics.

◆ *Opposition of C.R.Das*

The movement was officially launched on 1 August 1920, following Gandhiji's letter of 22 June, which was a request to Lord Chelmsford asserting the right to refuse to support a misruling ruler. On the same day, Lokamanya Tilak passed away, leading to mourning, processions, fasting, and prayers. In September, the Congress in Calcutta accepted non-cooperation as their programme. C.R. Das led the opposition against boycotting legislative council elections, which were set to take place soon. Even those who opposed the boycott accepted the Congress's discipline and withdrew from the polls.





Non-Cooperation Movement  
Source: India Today

#### ◆ *Nagpur Session of the Congress*

In December, the Congress session held in Nagpur decided to launch a Non-Cooperation campaign, which included surrendering titles, boycotting government-affiliated schools and colleges, law courts, foreign cloth, resignation from government service, and mass civil disobedience. The programme included setting up national schools and colleges, establishing panchayats for dispute settlement, encouraging hand-spinning and weaving, and urging Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji promised Swaraj would be ushered in within a year if the programme was fully implemented. The Nagpur session committed the Congress to extra-constitutional mass action, with many revolutionary terrorist groups, particularly in Bengal, pledged support for the movement.

#### ◆ *Change in the organisational structure of Congress*

To fulfil its new commitment, the Congress made significant changes to its principles and organisational structure, shifting its focus from constitutional and legal self-government to Swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means. Gandhiji's new constitution brought about other significant changes. The Congress decided to establish a Working Committee of fifteen members to manage daily affairs, a proposal initially proposed by Tilak in 1916. Gandhiji recognised the need for a cohesive body to guide a long-term movement and proposed a linguistic organisation of Provincial Congress Committees to maintain communication with the people in local languages. Through village and mohalla or ward committees, the Congress aimed to reach village and mohalla levels, with membership fees reduced to four annas per year for people with low incomes. Mass participation would provide a regular income source, while the organisational structure was simplified and democratised, with a focus on using Hindi as much as possible.

The Non-Cooperation Movement, initially launched by the Khilafat Conference, gained significant momentum after being endorsed by the Congress. Gandhiji and the Ali

◆ *Impact of Nationwide tour*

brothers embarked on a nationwide tour, meeting political workers and addressing hundreds of meetings. In just one month, thousands of students left schools and colleges to attend over 800 national institutions across the country.

◆ *Boycott of educational institutions*

The boycott of British educational institutions in Bengal was successful, leading to a province-wide strike in Calcutta, resulting in the disaffiliation of institutions from the government. C.R. Das promoted the movement, and Subhas Bose became the principal of the National College in Calcutta. Punjab also responded to the boycott, with Lala Lajpat Rai leading the charge. Other active areas included Bombay, U.P., Bihar, Orissa, and Assam, while Madras remained mostly unaffected.

◆ *Boycott of law courts*

The boycott of law courts by lawyers, led by prominent figures such as C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, M.R. Jayakar, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Vallabhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, T. Prakasam, and Asaf Ali. It was less successful than the educational boycott, but it was dramatic and inspiring. Bengal led the boycott, followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and Punjab.

◆ *Boycott of foreign clothes*

The most successful part of the programme was the boycott of foreign cloth, where volunteers would collect clothes made of foreign cloth and burn them. Prabhudas Gandhi, who accompanied Mahatma Gandhi on his nationwide tour in 1921, recalls how Gandhiji induced the crowd to remove their headress at small way-side stations, resulting in a pile of caps, dupattas, and turbans. As the train pulled away, flames leapt upwards. The boycott of foreign cloth shops led to a significant decrease in imports from rupees 102 crore in 1920-21 to rupees 57 crore in 1921-22. The movement also gained popularity by picketing toddy shops, which led to a decline in government revenues and the government's need to promote the health benefits of good drinks. These actions were not originally planned.

◆ *Promotion of Charkha and Khadi*

In March 1921, the AICC instructed Congressmen to focus on fund collection, member enrollment, and charkha distribution. A vigorous membership drive was started, reaching approximately 50 lakhs despite not reaching the target of one crore members. The Tilak Swaraj Fund was oversubscribed, exceeding the target of rupees one crore. Charkhas gained popularity, and Khadi became the national uniform. Gandhiji abandoned his *dhoti* and *kurta* for a *langot* after a student complained about the cost of khadi, and he

lived the rest of his life as a 'half-naked fakir'. This incident sparked a debate over the price of clothing.

◆ *Arrest of  
Mohammed Ali*

At the All-India Khilafat Conference in Karachi on 8 July 1921, Mohammed Ali declared that Muslims could no longer serve in the British army. He demanded that this be communicated to all Muslim army members. Ali and other leaders were arrested, and his speech was broadcast throughout the country. On October 4, 1921, leading Congressmen, including Gandhiji, repeated Mohammed Ali's words and issued a manifesto urging all civilians and armed forces to discontinue connections with the repressive government. The Congress Working Committee passed a resolution, which was adopted by all Congress Committees on 16 October, leading to the Government's disregard for the incident and its subsequent damage to its prestige.

◆ *Visit of Prince  
of Wales*

On 17 November 1921, the Prince of Wales visited Bombay, marking a day of hartal across the country. Gandhiji addressed a large meeting at the Elphinstone Mill, where foreign clothes were burnt on a large scale. However, clashes occurred between attendees of the welcome function and the crowd returning from Gandhi's meeting. Riots broke out and targeted Parsis, Christians, and Anglo-Indians as loyalists, resulting in police firing and a three-day turmoil resulting in 49 deaths. Peace returned after Gandhi fasted for three days, leaving him disturbed and concerned about the possibility of violence recurrence after mass civil disobedience was sanctioned.

◆ *Congress  
Volunteer Corp*

The Prince of Wales faced empty streets and downed shutters as non-cooperators refused to obey the government. The Congress Volunteer Corps emerged as a strong parallel police force. The Congress granted permission to the Congress Volunteer Corps to sanction mass civil disobedience. In some areas, including the Midnapore district in Bengal and Chirala-Pirala and Pedanandipadu taluka in the Guntur district of Andhra, no-tax movements were already underway.

◆ *Impact on  
peasant movements*

The Non-Cooperation Movement had an indirect impact on the *Kisan* movement in India, particularly in the Wardha region, where Kisan Sabhas and a Kisan movement had been developing since 1918. Jawaharlal Nehru's propaganda fuelled the existing ferment, making it difficult to distinguish between a non-cooperation meeting and a *Kisan* meeting. Non-cooperation and Khilafat propaganda in Malabar, Kerala, aroused Muslim tenants to rebel against landlords.



◆ *Protests in Andhra*

Tea plantation workers in Assam went on strike, which triggered strikes on the Assam-Bengal Railway and the steamer service. J.M. Sengupta, a Bengali nationalist leader, played a key role. In Midnapur, a Calcutta medical student-led a farmers' strike against a White zamindari company. Defiance of forest laws became popular in Andhra.

◆ *Spread of local movements*

Peasants and tribals in Rajasthan started movements to improve their living conditions, similar to the Akali Movement in Punjab, which sought to control gurudwaras from corrupt mahants. The Non-Cooperation Movement fuelled unrest and opposition to authority, resulting in the rise of local movements throughout the country. These movements frequently did not strictly follow the movement's program or non-violence policy, but their spirit of unrest and defiance helped to shape a more peaceful society.

◆ *Government attitude*

The Government concluded that the movement had started because of the failure of their previous policy. In September 1920, at the beginning of the movement, they decided to ignore it, fearing repression would make nationalists martyrs and fuel the spirit of revolt. Through the Gandhi-Reading discussions in May 1921, the government attempted to create a division between Gandhiji and the Khilafat leaders by convincing Gandhiji to request that the Ali brothers remove any violent suggestions from their speeches. However, this failed. In December, the government declared the volunteer corps illegal and arrested all members, indicating that the situation was too far.

◆ *Negotiations initiated but failed*

C.R. Das and his wife Basantidebi were arrested in Bengal, sparking a wave of protests. Over 30,000 people were arrested in two months, with only Gandhiji remaining out of jail. In December, negotiations were attempted, but the conditions offered involved sacrificing Khilafat leaders, which Gandhiji refused. The Home Government had already decided against a settlement and ordered the Viceroy, Lord Reading, to withdraw from the negotiations. Repression continued, with public meetings prohibited, newspapers barred, and midnight raids on Congress and Khilafat offices.

Gandhiji faced pressure from Congress and leadership to initiate mass civil disobedience. He was appointed sole authority on the issue during the Ahmedabad session of Congress in December 1921. The Government ignored the All-Parties Conference appeal in 1922 as well as Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy, stating that unless the ban on civil



◆ *Forced government to release political prisoners*

◆ *Mass Civil Disobedience Movement*

liberties was lifted and political prisoners released, he would be forced to continue mass civil disobedience. The Viceroy was unconvinced, so Gandhiji announced mass civil disobedience in Surat district's Bardoli taluka, urging all other parts of the country to cooperate and maintain discipline and peace so that the movement's attention could be focused on Bardoli alone. However, the Viceroy remained unmoved, forcing Bardoli to wait six years before launching a no-tax movement.

### 3.2.3.1 Chauri- Chaura Incident

◆ *Withdrawal of the Movement*

On 5 February 1922, a Congress and Khilafat procession in Gorakhpur, U.P., erupted into violence when a crowd, angered by the behaviour of police officers, attacked a police station in Chauri Chaura. The mob set the station on fire, resulting in the deaths of twenty-two police officers. In response to this tragic incident, Mahatma Gandhi decided to withdraw from the movement and persuaded the Congress Working Committee to ratify his decision. On February 12, 1922, the Congress Working Committee in Bardoli decided to cease activities causing lawbreaking and focus on constructive work, including popularising khadi, national schools, and campaigning for temperance, Hindu-Muslim unity, and against untouchability.

### 3.2.3.2 Criticism against the Withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement

◆ *Discontent among the leaders*

Gandhiji's withdrawal from the movement in response to violence at Chauri Chaura sparked controversy, with Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Bose perplexed. They couldn't understand why the entire country had to pay for the behaviour of some people in a remote village.

◆ *Criticism against Gandhiji*

In 'India Today', R. Palme Dutt criticised Gandhiji's decision, seeing it as evidence of Mahatma Gandhi's concern for the privileged classes in Indian society. He argued that Gandhi did not withdraw from the movement solely because he believed in the importance of non-violence. He withdrew it because the events at Chauri Chaura represented and indicated the Indian masses' growing militancy, radicalisation, and willingness to attack the status quo of property relations. They argued that Gandhiji ended the movement due to fear of radical possibility, as well as the possibility of the movement falling into the hands of radical forces, aiming to protect landlords and capitalists who would





likely be the victims of the violence. They found supporting evidence in the Bardoli Congress Working Committee resolution of 12 February 1922, announcing the withdrawal, asking peasants to pay taxes and tenants to pay rents. They considered this to be the true motivation behind the historic decision of February 1922.

♦ *Violence invokes government repression*

Bipan Chandra dismissed all the criticisms that had been raised against Gandhiji. He stated that the argument that violence in a remote village could not be a sufficient cause for the decision to withdraw the movement was weak. Gandhiji repeatedly warned against non-violent movements in other parts of the country and asked the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee to withdraw permission for some District Congress Committees to start civil disobedience. This was because the movement could easily take a violent turn due to its volatile nature or authorities' provocation. If violence occurred anywhere, it could be used as an excuse by the government to launch a massive attack on the movement. This would disrupt the strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience, which relied on exposing repression forces using armed force against peaceful civil resisters.

♦ *Violence led to demoralisation*

Secondly, he argued that Gandhiji's assessment of the chances of conducting a mass civil disobedience campaign in Bardoli may have been influenced by the government's repression after Chauri Chaura. By withdrawing from the movement and assuming responsibility for the Working Committee, Gandhiji protected the movement from repression and demoralisation. Although the withdrawal led to demoralisation, it may have been better to have believed that if Gandhiji had not withdrawn, the movement would have surged forward.

♦ *Radical fear unclear*

Thirdly, the argument that Chauri Chaura exemplified radical sentiment and withdrawal was driven by fear of radical forces is less convincing. The crowd at Chauri Chaura was angered by police overbearing and attacked them, not aiming to overturn property relations. Peasant unrest in Avadh and Malabar had already ended, and the Eka movement in rural areas did not want to abolish the Zamindari system. The no-tax movement in Guntur was peaceful and on the decline before February 1922. Bipan Chandra questioned the possibility of radical fear of withdrawing from the movement.

Finally, the Bardoli resolution, which announced the

♦ *Criticism regarding Bardoli Resolution not valid*

withdrawal of the movement, included clauses requiring peasants and tenants to pay taxes and rent while assuring zamindars that Congress had no hidden motives. The Congress had not sanctioned non-payment of rent or questioned zamindars' rights during the movement. The resolution was simply a reiteration of its position on this issue, indicating that non-payment of taxes would cease if the movement were withdrawn.

♦ *Reason for Gandhi's decision to end the Movement*

Gandhi's decision to put an end to the movement could have been influenced by the movement's decline in the second half of 1921, with students returning to school, lawyers and litigants returning to law courts, commercial classes showing weariness and concern about foreign cloth stocks, and attendance at meetings and rallies declining in both urban and rural areas.

♦ *Debate over a year*

Gandhi's critics often overlook the inherent tendency of mass movements to decline after reaching a certain height. The masses' capacity to withstand repression, suffering, and sacrifices is limited. A time comes when the masses need to consolidate, recuperate, and gather strength for the next struggle. Withdrawal from a movement or a phase of non-confrontation is an inherent part of a political action strategy based on the masses, not betrayal. The timing of Gandhiji's withdrawal from the Chauri Chaura movement, which had been ongoing for over a year, is debated. However, he may have believed that the moment he chose was the right one, as the movement's internal weaknesses were not yet apparent enough to force a surrender or make the retreat appear like a run.

♦ *INC gain support from all sections of the people*

The Non-Cooperation Movement successfully gained support and sympathy from a large section of the Indian people, defying the charge of the Indian National Congress representing a "microscopic minority" made by Viceroy Dufferin in 1888. The movement reached various sections of Indian society, including peasants, workers, artisans, shopkeepers, traders, professionals, and white-collar employees. The movement's spread was nationwide, with some areas showing more activity than others.

♦ *Mass Participation*

The millions of common people in India exhibit their ability to participate in modern nationalist politics through their courage, sacrifice and strength. They dismiss the belief that national freedom was only for the educated and wealthy, demonstrating that it was a fundamental desire for all people



of a nation. Although they may not have fully understood the repercussions, arguments, or discipline required for successful movement conduct, their courage and sacrifice demonstrated the potential of the poor in politics.

◆ *Participation of Muslims*

During this period, many people were introduced to modern nationalist politics and ideology for the first time. This was the first time nationalists from towns, schools, and villages tried to spread the ideology within their communities. Although the success was limited and the movement had shortcomings, the change was noticeable. More serious and consistent efforts were required to spread the ideology and movement to the masses, as many sections remained outside the scope of the new awakening. The Muslim participation in the movement and its maintenance of communal unity was a significant achievement and their participation gave movement a mass character.

◆ *Challenged the colonial rule*

The Non-Cooperation Movement in India was a transformative force, politicising and mobilising millions of people. It turned the national movement into a revolutionary force, challenging the invincibility of colonial rule. The movement was not just about economic criticism or satyagraha; it was about mass struggle. This mass character of the movement, with its two-thirds of arrested Muslims, led to a significant shift in loss of fear among the masses, a key element in challenging colonial rule.

## Summarised Overview

During the early twentieth century, two major movements in India, the Khilafat Movement and the Non-Cooperation Movement, brought people together to oppose British rule. These movements followed a strategy of non-violent non-cooperation. Even though the Khilafat Movement wasn't directly linked to Indian politics, it helped unite Hindus and Muslims in India against the British. The Khilafat issue led to a radical nationalist trend among young Muslims and traditional Muslim scholars, who were critical of British rule. They were outraged by the treatment of Turkey after the First World War, which led to the dismemberment of Turkey and the removal of the *Khalifa* from power. In India, Muslims demanded the *Khalifa's* control over sacred places and sufficient territories after territorial arrangements. In 1919, the Khilafat Committee, led by the Ali brothers, aimed to change the British government's stance towards Turkey, preparing the ground for a nationwide agitation.

In February 1920, a Hindu-Muslim delegation attempted but failed to resolve grievances regarding the *Khilafat* issue. Gandhiji announced that if peace treaties

did not satisfy Indian Muslims, he would lead a non-cooperation movement. The Treaty of Sevres, signed in May 1920, dismembered Turkey. In June 1920, an all-party conference approved the boycott of schools, colleges, and law courts. In September 1920, Congress approved a non-cooperation program that included boycotts of government schools, law courts, legislative councils, foreign cloth, hand-spinning, and the renunciation of government honours and titles.

Gandhi and the Ali brothers went on a nationwide tour, inspiring thousands of students to join national schools and colleges. Many lawyers stopped practising, foreign cloth was burned, and imports fell. The Tilak Swaraj Fund was oversubscribed, and the Congress Volunteer Corps served as a parallel police force. In July 1921, the Ali brothers called on Muslims to resign from the army. Gandhi echoed their call, calling for civil disobedience. In Assam, tea plantations, and railways organised strikes. The Prince of Wales' November 1921 visit also sparked strikes and demonstrations. Local struggles, such as the Awadh Kisan Movement, Eka Movement, Mappila Revolt, and Sikh agitation for mahant removal in Punjab, arose as a result of defiance and unrest. In May 1921, Gandhi's talks with Viceroy Reading broke down, leading to heavy government intervention, including banning volunteer corps, public meetings, and arresting leaders.

Chauri-Chaura, a village in Gorakhpur, was the scene of violence in 1922 that led to Gandhi withdrawing the Non Co-operation Movement. The Congress Working Committee decided to focus on constructive work, but nationalist leaders expressed bewilderment. Gandhiji believed that the non-violent method was not fully understood by the people, leading to incidents like Chauri-Chaura that could lead to violence. The colonial regime could easily suppress such movements, using state armed forces against protestors. The movement also showed signs of fatigue, as it was difficult to sustain at a high pitch for a long time.

There were criticisms against Gandhiji's decision of the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement. The Non-Cooperation Movement drew urban Muslims into the national movement. This movement politicised all strata of society, imbuing the national movement with revolutionary characteristics. The economic critique of moderate nationalists and the mass struggle of Satyagraha challenged the myths of colonial rule, causing the masses to lose faith in its repressive institutions.

## Assignments

1. Describe the significance of the Rowlatt Act. How did the Rowlatt Act affect the civil liberties of Indians?
2. Write a short note on the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and its impact on the Indian National Movement.
3. Discuss the origin and significance of the Khilafat Movement in India. Evaluate the impact of the Khilafat Movement on Hindu-Muslim unity in India.
4. How did the Non-Cooperation movement shift in the nature and tactics of the Indian Independence Movement? Analyse Mahatma Gandhi's role and leadership in the Non-Cooperation Movement.
5. How did the Chauri Chaura incident impact the Non-Cooperation Movement?
6. What were the main reasons behind the dismissal of the Non-Co-operation Movement? How did it impact the Indian National movement?

## Suggested Reading

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6. Majumdar, R.C., *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol.III, South Asia Books, 1998.
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### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU



## From Swaraj to Purna Swaraj

### Learning Outcomes

After the successful completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ analyse the emergence of the Swarajists, their activities and their impact on Indian's struggle for independence.
- ◆ assess the Simon Commission's objectives, its reception in India, and its influence on the Indian National movement
- ◆ examine the key provisions of the Nehru Report and its significance in shaping the constitutional and political discourse of the time
- ◆ evaluate the outcomes of the Lahore Session of the Congress and the implications of the declaration of 'Purna Swaraj'
- ◆ analyse the extent of mass participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement, its impact, and the Government's response

### Background

Nationalist sentiments permeated all levels of society, endowing the Non-Cooperation Movement with a revolutionary zeal. However, following the withdrawal of the Movement, a political vacuum emerged during this period, and the activities of the Swarajists and their Council entry gained the attention of the masses. By the introduction of council entry, Swarajists expanded the nationalist movement into legislative and constitutional arenas. This was a critical period for the national movement, which was sustained by Gandhi's constructive programme and the Swaraj Party's efforts. The late 1920s also witnessed the demand of Indians for 'Purna Swaraj'. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, influenced by socialist ideas, replaced the demand for 'Dominion status' with 'Purna Swaraj' or Complete Independence. This unit critically examines the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-31) in India, a significant anti-imperialist movement led by Gandhi. The Salt Satyagraha expanded the social reach of the anti-imperialist struggle. It discusses the movement's background, issues, and regional responses and its impact on the National movement. We will also discuss the emergence of Swarajists and their activities, the arrival of the Simon Commission and its repercussions on national movement. The unit deals with the Nehru Report and the following 'Fourteen Points' of Jinnah, Lahore Session of the Congress and the declaration of 'Purna Swaraj'.



## Keywords

Swarajist, Council Entry, Simon Commission, Nehru Report, Boycott, Civil Disobedience Movement, Salt Satyagraha, Lahore Session

## Discussion

♦ *Political situation after Non-Cooperation movement*

In February 1922, the Non-Cooperation Movement was withdrawn, followed by Gandhiji's arrest and six-year imprisonment for spreading anti-government sentiments. This led to disintegration, disorganisation, and demoralisation among nationalists, causing concerns about the movement's potential for inaction. Some questioned Gandhiji's strategy, while others sought alternative solutions. C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru and Ajmal Khan proposed a new political activity that would maintain resistance to colonial rule. The nationalists proposed ending the boycott of legislative councils, stepping into them, revealing them as 'sham parliament', and obstructing their work. They argued that this would not be the end of non-cooperation but rather strengthen it by extending it to councils themselves.

### 3.3.1 Formation of Swaraj Party

♦ *Formation of Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party*

At the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922, C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru, President and Secretary of the Congress respectively, proposed a council-entry program. However, a section of Congress, led by Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, M. A. Ansari and C. Rajagopalachari, opposed the proposal, which was defeated by 1748 to 890 votes. Das and Motilal resigned, and on January 1, 1923, the Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party was formed, later known as the Swaraj Party. Das served as President and Motilal as a Secretary of the new party. The people who supported the council-entry program became referred to as "pro-changers," while those who continued to support the boycott of the councils were known as "no-changers."



**Deshabandhu Chittaranjan**



**Motilal Nehru**

Source: Indian National Congress-INC Timeline

♦ *Policy of obstruction*

The Swaraj Party fully accepted the Congress programme, except for its participation in the upcoming elections. They declared a national demand for self-government in councils, and if rejected, their elected members would pursue a policy of continuous obstruction to prevent government through councils. This would result in deadlocks on all measures before them, causing internal turmoil.

♦ *Debate between pro-changers and no-changers*

Even though Gandhiji was in jail, Swarajists led the no-changers who advocated for the continuation of the boycott and non-cooperation program, effective implementation of the constructive program, and quiet preparations for the recommencement of the suspended civil disobedience. The pro-changers and no-changers engaged in a heated debate. Still, both agreed that civil disobedience was not possible immediately and that no mass movement could be carried on indefinitely. They decided that a temporary retreat from the active phase was necessary to arouse anti-imperialist forces, overcome demoralisation, intensify politicisation, widen political participation, strengthen the organisation, and maintain cadre recruitment, training, and morale. The national movement faced the fundamental challenge of carrying on political work during its inactive phases.

The Swarajists supported entering the councils, seeing it as an extension of the non-cooperation movement and a new front for political action. They believed council participation would inspire the masses, prevent the government from filling seats with pro-colonial elements, and serve as a platform for political struggle, not for gradual reform of colonial rule.

### 3.3.1.1 Swarajist Experiments

♦ *Difference between Swarajists and No-changers*

Swarajists aimed to transform the legislatures into political battle arenas rather than using them to gradually transform the colonial state, as the Liberals desired. Instead, they aimed to use them as a ground for the struggle for the overthrow of the colonial state. The no-changers opposed council entry, believing it would lead to neglect of constructive work among the masses, loss of revolutionary zeal, and political corruption. They feared legislators who would enter councils would give up obstruction politics, become absorbed in the imperial constitutional framework, and cooperate with the government on minor reforms. They argued that constructive work would help the masses to prepare them for civil disobedience.





- ◆ *Fear of split*
- ◆ *Delhi Session of Congress*

As the pro-changer and no-changer conflict intensified, nationalist ranks became increasingly discontented, fearing a repeat of the 1907 split, leading to pressure on leaders to curb their public disagreements. Both Congressmen and Swarajist leaders shifted towards mutual compromise as a result of the strong need for unity, the realisation that a mass movement outside legislatures would create real sanctions, and the acceptance of Gandhi's leadership. Both groups felt the need for unity and the importance of parliamentary work in achieving national demands. In September 1923, Congress held a special session in Delhi, suspending propaganda against council entry and allowing Congressmen to run for office in upcoming elections.

- ◆ *Gandhi's opposition*

Gandhiji was released from jail in February 1924 due to health reasons. He opposed council entry and obstruction of work in the councils, which he viewed as contrary to non-violent non-cooperation. The Bombay Government hoped for a split in Congress, suggesting that they would condemn the Swarajists for their defection from non-cooperation. Viceroy Reading informed the Secretary of State for India on June 6, 1924, that the possibility of a split between Swarajists and Gandhiji was increasing. Swarajist leader Moonje stated that the Swarajists were now focused on breaking Gandhiji's hold on the Congress. The British government hoped that such a division would diminish the effectiveness of the legislatures and reduce their potential to challenge British authority.

- ◆ *Change in the attitude of Gandhiji towards Swarajists*

Despite his initial opposition, Gandhiji eventually adapted to the Swarajists, showcasing his political style, especially in how he engaged with colleagues who held differing viewpoints. Gandhiji admired the Swarajist leaders, despite their opposition, for their respect and sacrifices for the country. He admired their love for freedom and maintained warm personal relations with C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru based on mutual respect and regard. After his release, Gandhiji hesitated to comment on council entry until he met Swarajist leaders. Despite believing in the futility and harmful nature of the Swarajists' program, he remained convinced that public opposition to council entry would be counterproductive. Gandhiji was dissatisfied with the differences between the 'changers' and 'no-changers'. He believed that withdrawing from council entry would be disastrous and misinterpreted by the government, strengthening its authoritarian behaviour and repressive policies.

In 1924, the Government of India launched a sweeping

◆ *Massive attack on Swarajists*

crackdown on civil liberties and the Swarajists in Bengal, justifying the measures as part of their campaign against terrorism. They raided Congress offices and searched houses, arresting a large number of revolutionary terrorists and Swarajists. Gandhiji, angered by the threat, wrote in 'Young India', stating that the Rowlatt Act was dead, but the spirit that prompted it remained. He believed that as long as English interests were opposed to Indian interests, anarchic crime would persist. Gandhiji defended Swarajists against the Government's offensive, stating he would have been false if he had not stood by them, despite his disagreements with Council entry.

◆ *Elections to the Council 1923*  
◆ *Swarajist manifesto*

In November 1923, elections were held for legislative councils in India. The Swarajist manifesto, which was released on 14 October, emphasised the British's selfish interests and the sham reforms as a means to continue the exploitation of India's unlimited resources. The manifesto promised Swarajists to dismantle these reforms from within the councils, emphasising the British's guiding motives in governing India. Swarajists formed a political front with the Independents led by M.A. Jinnah, Liberals, and individuals like Madan Mohan Malaviya in the Central Legislative Assembly, aiming to inflict defeat on the Government and build coalitions in most provinces.

◆ *Revealed the true nature of the British government*

The Indian legislatures were reformed in 1919 and had a "semblance" of power because they had elected members, but they had no control over the provinces or the central government. The real nature of the reformed councils was revealed when the Swarajists repeatedly pressured the British Government to certify laws. They were successful in choosing Vithalbhai Patel to lead the Central Legislative Assembly in March 1925.

◆ *Swarajists in Council*

Swarajists, despite intervening on various issues and often outvoting the government, focused on three major problems: firstly, constitutional advance leading to self-government; secondly, civil liberties, the release of political prisoners and repeal of repressive laws; and thirdly, development of Indigenous industries. Their speeches were widely reported in the press and followed by readers. Motilal Nehru introduced a national demand for a new constitution, transferring real power to India. The demand was passed by 64 votes to 48 and reiterated by 72 votes to 45 in September 1925. However, the government faced humiliation when its demands for budgetary grants were repeatedly rejected.



◆ Criticised repressive policies of the government

The government faced numerous challenges when repealing repressive laws and releasing political prisoners. Critics such as C.S. Ranga Iyer and Lala Lajpat Rai accused government officials of being criminals and assassins. At the same time, C.R. Das criticised the government's repressive policy, claiming that repression is a process of consolidating arbitrary power and condemning violence as a means of achieving political liberty. These policies were criticised for their violent nature and lack of progress.

◆ Congress control over municipalities and local bodies

Members of Congress gained control of numerous municipalities and local bodies between 1923 and 1924. Das became the Mayor of Calcutta, with Subhas Bose as his Chief Executive Officer, Vithalbhai Patel, the President of Bombay Corporation, Vallabhbhai Patel of Ahmedabad Municipality, Rajendra Prasad of Patna Municipality, and Jawaharlal Nehru of Allahabad Municipality. The no-changers actively participated in these ventures, believing that local bodies could promote the constructive programme. Despite their limited power, numerous municipalities and district boards, led by influential leaders, aimed to improve the quality of life for the people through excellent work in education, sanitation, health, anti-untouchability, and khadi promotion, gaining admiration and generating popular enthusiasm.

◆ The death of C.R. Das resulted in the weakening of internal unity

C.R. Das' death in 1925 caused a significant loss for Swarajists, and in the absence of mass movements, political developments such as communalism and communal riots intensified. Colonial authorities encouraged communalists of all hues, creating a fertile ground for their activities, as the lack of a mass movement resulted in political frustrations. The Swaraj Party's focus on parliamentary politics weakened its internal unity, as the limits of obstruction were reached after repeatedly outvoting the Government and forcing it to certify its legislation. To intensify the conflict, a mass movement outside the legislatures was needed, but the Swarajists lacked a policy to coordinate their militant work with mass political work, relying largely on newspaper reporting.

◆ Failure in coalition politics

The Swarajists struggled to maintain coalition partners due to their lack of belief in their strategy of uniform obstruction. Coalition politics pushed them back from militant obstructionism, and some legislators were unable to resist parliamentary perquisites and status positions. The government's policy of dividing nationalists, separating Swarajists from Liberals, militant Swarajists from moderate

ones, and Hindus from Muslims led to communal discord within the Swaraj Party. In Bengal, the Swaraj Party failed to support tenants' cause against zamindars, losing support from pro-tenant Muslim members. Furthermore, the Swaraj Party couldn't avoid communal discord within its ranks.

◆ *Withdraw from the legislature*

A group of Responsivists joined the Swaraj Party in the Central Provinces, seeking to work reforms and hold office. They were joined by leaders like N.C. Kelkar, M.R. Jayakar, Lajpat Rai, and Madan Mohan Malaviya. To avoid further dissolution and parliamentary corruption, the party's main leadership reaffirmed its belief in mass civil disobedience and decided to withdraw from the legislature in March 1926. Gandhiji also criticised council entry, stating that it was ineffective and unsuitable, as he became more convinced of the futility and inadequacy of council entry.

◆ *Election of 1926*

In November 1926, the Swaraj Party faced a weak and demoralised force in the elections. It faced opposition from the government, loyalist elements, and dissenters, as well as Hindu and Muslim communalists. The party faced a campaign against them, with Motilal Nehru accused of sacrificing Hindu interests and Muslim communalists branding them as anti-Muslim. The Swaraj Party won forty seats at the centre and half in Madras but was severely defeated in other provinces, particularly in the U.P., Central Provinces, and Punjab. Hindu and Muslim communalists also increased their representation in councils, and the Swarajists could not form a nationalist coalition in the legislatures like in 1923.

◆ *Opposition against the Public Safety Bill*

Swarajists defeated the government on several bills, including the Public Safety Bill of 1928. Concerned about the spread of socialist and communist ideas, the Indian government proposed gaining the authority to deport 'undesirable' and 'radical' foreigners, believing that British and other foreign agitators were sent to India by the Communist International. Nationalists across the spectrum, from moderates to militants, united in their opposition to the bill. Nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Purshottamdas Thakurdas and G.D. Birla, spokesmen of the capitalist class, vehemently criticised the Bill on various grounds.

◆ *Repressive policy of government*

In March 1929, the government arrested 31 leading communists, trade unionists, and other left-wing leaders and put them on trial in Meerut. Nationalists criticised the government for declaring a 'period of terrorism' and claiming





that it was intended to strike terror rather than eradicate Communism. Gandhiji argued that the government believed in superseding all laws and revealing hidden corruption. Swarajists eventually walked out of legislatures in 1930 due to the Lahore Congress resolution and civil disobedience.

♦ *Swarajists succeeded in exposing the true nature of government*

The Swarajists played a significant role in filling the political void during the national movement's regained strength without being co-opted by the colonial regime. Motilal Nehru praised their standing firm, and the majority of their members worked in the legislatures in a disciplined manner, withdrawing when called. They demonstrated how legislatures can be used creatively to promote self-reliance and anti-imperialism. They also exposed the hollowness of the Reform Act of 1919 and showed that India was being ruled by 'lawless laws'.

♦ *Activities of no-changers*

The no-changers in the country engaged in grassroots work promoting khadi and spinning, national education, Hindu-Muslim unity, untouchability, and boycotting foreign cloth. They established hundreds of *ashrams* across the country, providing practical training for political cadres in khadi work and working among lower castes and tribal people. Examples include Vedchhi *Ashram* in Bardoli taluka, Gujarat, where Chimanlal Mehta, Jugatram Dave, and Chimanlal Bhatt dedicated their lives to education and Ravishankar Maharaj's work among lower caste Baraiyas.

♦ *Constructive efforts*

Gandhian constructive work provided relief to the poor promoted nation-making, and made urban-based cadres familiar with village conditions. It provided Congress political workers with continuous work in the passive phases of the national movement, helped build bonds with previously untouched masses, and developed their organising capacity and self-reliance. It filled rural masses with hope and increased Congress' influence, fostering a sense of hope and self-reliance.

♦ *Upliftment of Lower castes and tribes*

The Indian people's struggle against colonialism was largely facilitated by the uplift of lower castes and tribes. The boycott of foreign cloth showed rulers and the world the Indian people's determination for freedom. National schools and colleges trained young men in a non-colonial ideology, with many dropping out in 1920-21, returning to recognised institutions and becoming long-time cadres of the movement. Constructive work played a crucial role in recruiting and training soldiers of freedom, as well as in selecting and testing



their officers and leaders. These workers, including Khadi Bhandar workers, students, teachers, and inmates from Gandhi Ashrams, served as the backbone of civil disobedience movements, both as organisers and active Satyagrahis during the active Satyagraha phase of the nationalist movement.

### 3.3.2 Simon Commission (1927)

#### ◆ Constitution of Simon Commission

In late 1927, a mass anti-imperialist upsurge in India began to rise. The British Government announced an all-White commission to recommend India's readiness for further constitutional progress. Indian nationalists had long criticised the constitutional reforms of 1919 as inadequate, but the government argued that a ten-year period was necessary before fresh proposals were considered. In 1927, the Conservative Government of Britain, fearing defeat by the Labour Party, decided not to leave the future of the colonies of British Empire in the hands of the Labour Government, leading to the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission, also known as the Simon Commission. The Simon Commission, was established by the British government under Stanley Baldwin's prime ministership in 1927, comprising seven members from four Conservatives, two Labourites, and one Liberal.

#### ◆ Decision to boycott the Simon Commission

The Indians' response to the Commission was unanimous. Even those of moderate political opinions were unwilling to accept the insult that no Indian was considered suitable to serve on a body that asserted the authority to determine India's political future. The Liberal Federation, Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, and Muslim League with Mohammed Ali Jinnah supported a boycott of the Commission. The Indian National Congress turned the boycott into a popular movement, resolving it at its annual session in December 1927 at Madras. Jawaharlal Nehru even passed a snap resolution declaring complete independence as Congress's goal. Gandhiji emphasised that the Simon Commission needed corresponding action, not heroic speeches or declarations.

On 3 February 1928, Simon and his friends arrived in Bombay, leading to a hartal in major cities, mass rallies, processions, and black-flag demonstrations. A clash with the police in Madras led to the death of one person, and T. Prakasam embodied the occasion by baring his chest against armed policemen who tried to prevent him from reaching the scene. Simon travelled to Calcutta, Lahore, Lucknow,



◆ *Protests  
against Simon  
Commission*

Vijayawada, and Poona, where he was greeted by thousands of people carrying black flags. The youth of Poona used the proximity of the road and rail track between Lonavala and Pune to defy Simon and Company. They drove alongside the train, waving black flags. In Lucknow, Khaliquzzaman created floating kites and balloons with the slogan 'Go Back Simon' for a reception organised by taluqdars for Commission members in Kaiserbagh.



◆ Protest against Simon Commission (Source: Getty Images)

◆ *Emergence  
of youth political  
activism*

Popular anger was expressed at the police's handling of protesters, with repeated lathi charges and beatings of respected leaders. In Lucknow, Jawaharlal Nehru and Govind Ballabh Pant were beaten up by the police. Lala Lajpat Rai, a revered leader of Punjab, was hit by lathis on 30 October and died from injuries sustained from the beating in Lahore on 17 November 1928. Bhagat Singh and his comrades sought revenge by killing white police official Saunders in December 1928. The Simon boycott movement in India introduced a new generation of youth to political activism, giving it a militant flavour. By 1927, a youth movement had already begun, but participation in the Simon agitation boosted the formation of youth leagues and associations. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose led this new wave, addressing and presiding

over numerous youth conferences across the country.

### 3.3.3 Nehru report

◆ *Lord Birkenhead's challenge*

◆ *Provisions of Nehru Report*

Lord Birkenhead, the Conservative Secretary of State, emphasised the inability of Indians to create a concrete constitutional reform scheme, 'which had the support of wide sections of Indian political opinion'. This challenge was addressed during the All-Parties Conference in 1928, which resulted in the Nehru Report, named after Motilal Nehru, which defined 'Dominion Status' as the desired form of government for India. The report gained support from various sections of Indian political opinion. The report rejected the concept of separate communal electorates. Muslims would have reserved seats at the Centre and in provinces where they were a minority but not in regions where they were the majority in terms of population. It also recommended universal adult suffrage, equal rights for women, union freedom, and state dissociation from religion.

◆ *Muslim League demand rejected*

◆ *Fourteen Points of Jinnah*

The Muslim League, led by Jinnah, continued to demand seats for Muslims, particularly in Muslim-majority provinces. Motilal Nehru and other secular leaders faced a dilemma: if they conceded more to Muslim communal sentiments, Hindu communalists would withdraw their support, and if they satisfied them, Muslim leaders would be estranged. If no concessions were forthcoming, Jinnah withdrew his support and proposed his famous 'Fourteen Points', reiterating his objections to the Nehru Report. In March 1929, Jinnah proposed 14 points for the Muslim League's future propaganda. These include a federal constitution with residual powers to provinces, provincial autonomy, and constitutional amendments without state concurrence. Muslims should have adequate representation in legislatures, services, and self-governing bodies. One-third Muslim representation in the central parliament and one-third in cabinet cabinets should be Muslims and a separate electorate. Minority communities should not be allowed to pass bills or resolutions deemed against their interests. Territorial redistribution should not affect the Muslim majority in Punjab, Bengal, and NWFP. Separation of Sindh from Bombay and constitutional reforms in NWFP and Baluchistan are also included.

Jawaharlal Nehru, along with Subhas Bose and Satyamurthi, were dissatisfied with the Nehru Report's declaration of Dominion Status, which they argued was the basis for India's future constitution. They aimed for complete independence,



◆ *Dissatisfaction with the Nehru Report*

and in December 1928, they joined the Congress at Calcutta, pushing for the acceptance of 'Purna Swaraj' or complete independence as the Congress's goal. Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, along with other leaders, argued against abandoning the national consensus on Dominion Status and imposed a two-year grace period for the Government. Under pressure, the grace period was reduced to a year, and the Congress decided to adopt complete independence if the Government did not accept a constitution based on Dominion Status by the end of the year. The majority of delegates approved a resolution supporting this plan, and further amendments seeking immediate adoption of complete independence were defeated.

◆ *Prepared people for direct political action*

◆ *Initiation for Round Table Conferences*

In 1929, Gandhiji initiated a campaign to prepare the people for direct political action, leading to the formation of the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee and the public burning of foreign cloth. He led the campaign in Calcutta, burning foreign clothes in a public park before a crowd of thousands. In May 1929, a Labour Government led by Ramsay MacDonald took office in Britain, and Viceroy Lord Irwin was called to London for consultations. He announced that India's progress was based on attaining dominion status and promised a Round Table Conference. A conference of national leaders issued the 'Delhi manifesto', demanding a clearer purpose for the Round Table Conference. On 23 December, Irwin declared he could not provide the assurance demanded by Gandhiji and others, signalling the end of negotiations and the beginning of confrontation.

### 3.3.4 Lahore Session of the Congress-1929

◆ *Jawaharlal Nehru as President of INC*

The Congress annual sessions in Lahore were memorable and celebrated the popularisation of 'Purna Swaraj' by Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji played a decisive role in appointing Jawaharlal Nehru as President during a critical year of mass struggle. Despite only three out of eighteen Provincial Congress Committees wanting Nehru, Gandhiji insisted due to the occasion and the youth's success in the Simon Boycott. The upsurge of the youth was recognised as a success.

Jawaharlal Nehru's Presidential Address in 1929 was a call to action for India to free itself from foreign rule. He emphasised that liberation did not mean simply removing foreign rule but also stressed the importance of a mass movement for liberation, which should be peaceful. On



◆ *Presidential Address reflects the aim of Nehru*

December 31, 1929, the tricolour flag of Indian independence was raised on the banks of the river Ravi amidst excitement and a stern determination for the year ahead. The main goal was to establish a nation free from foreign rule, a vision that the nation's leaders echoed.

◆ *Indian Independence Pledge*

The Congress organised public meetings on 26 January to read and affirm the Indian Independence Pledge, which was a huge success. The pledge stated that the Indian people have an inalienable right to freedom, enjoy the fruits of their labour, and have the necessities of life for growth. If a government oppresses them, they have the right to alter or abolish it. The British Government in India has deprived the Indian people of their freedom and based itself on mass exploitation, resulting in economic, political, cultural, and spiritual ruin. The Congress believed that India needed to break free from the British and attain 'Purna Swaraj' or Complete Independence to achieve this goal. India has suffered economically due to heavy taxes, the destruction of village industries, and the manipulation of customs and currency. The British regime has reduced India's political status, denying the people real political power and limiting their freedom of expression and association.

◆ *Preparation for Civil disobedience*

Indians were preparing to withdraw voluntary associations from the British Government and prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. They believed that if they can withdraw their help and stop tax payments without violence, the end of oppressive rule is assured. They were resolving to follow Congress instructions for 'Purna Swaraj'.

◆ *Gandhiji's ultimatum to Irwin was ignored*

### 3.3.5 Civil Disobedience Movement

The Lahore Congress of 1929 empowered the Working Committee to launch a civil disobedience program, including tax non-payment and resigning from the legislatures. In mid-February 1930, the Committee granted Gandhiji full authority to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. After his ultimatum to Lord Irwin on January 31, which included 11 minimum demands, was disregarded, the only option left was civil disobedience.

In February, Gandhi criticised the salt tax as an inhuman poll tax, targeting millions of people, including the starving, sick, and helpless. He wrote a letter to the Viceroy on 2 March, stating that every true *Satyagrahi* disobey the salt laws and that he would proceed with co-workers of the *Ashram*





◆ *Decision to violate salt laws*

to disobey the provisions of the salt laws. He hoped that thousands of people would be disciplined enough to take up the work after him and violate the Salt Act.

◆ *Dandi March*  
◆ *Violation of Salt law*

Gandhiji and a group of 78 members of the Sabarmati Ashram, from Ahmedabad to Gujarat, marched 240 miles from their headquarters. They would then break the salt laws by collecting salt from the beach at Dandi. Before the march began, thousands of people gathered at the Sabarmati Ashram to witness dramatic events. Gandhiji explained his plans, emphasised the need for non-violence, and prepared the people for the government's response. He suggested civil disobedience of salt laws, picketing liquor and foreign-cloth shops, refusing taxes, lawyers there boycotting courts, and resigning government servants. He said that truth and non-violence should be the only means for attaining *swaraj* and that the 'pledge of truth and non-violence be faithfully kept'.



◆

Dandi March, led by Gandhiji (*The Hindu*)

◆ *Begining of Civil Disobedience Movement*

Gandhi emphasised the power of civil disobedience, stating that if ten people from each of India's 700,000 villages came forward to manufacture salt and disobey the Salt Act, the government would be unable to enforce the law. Gandhi's march in India was a powerful event that captured the attention of the public. News of his progress, speeches, and the crowds that followed the march were carried by newspapers and broadcast live by Congress workers. The 300 village officials in Gujarat who resigned their posts in response to his appeal were also reported. By the time

Gandhi reached Dandi, a whole nation was eagerly waiting for the final signal. On 6 April 1930, Gandhi inaugurated the Civil Disobedience Movement, a movement that would remain unsurpassed in the history of the Indian national movement as the most widespread national movement in India.

### 3.3.5.1 Spread of Salt Satyagraha

During Gandhi's March to Dandi, Congress leaders and workers took on organisational responsibilities such as recruiting volunteers, setting up local committees, gathering money, and visiting villages to disseminate nationalist ideas. Preparations for launching the Salt Satyagraha included selecting sites and preparing volunteers. Gandhiji's activity at Dandi led to a nationwide defiance of salt laws. In Tamil Nadu, C. Rajagopalachari led a salt march from Trichinopoly to Vedaranniyam, collecting enough volunteers to continue the campaign. In Malabar, K. Kelappan, the Vaikom Satyagraha stalwart, walked from Calicut to Payyanur. A band of Satyagrahis walked from Sylhet in Assam to Noakhali on the Bengal Coast to make salt. In Andhra, *sibirams* (military-style camps) were set up as headquarters for the Salt *Satyagraha*, marching through villages to defy the law.

◆ *Response to the call of Gandhiji for Salt Satyagraha*

Jawaharlal Nehru's arrest on 14 April for defying the salt law sparked widespread protests and police clashes in Madras, Calcutta, and Karachi. On 23 April, the arrest of Congress leaders in the North West Frontier Province led to a massive demonstration in Peshawar. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's mass work led to the formation of the non-violent revolutionaries, the *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Red Shirts), who played a significant role in the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Peshawar demonstrations were substantial as they saw Garhwali regiment soldiers refusing to fire on the unarmed crowd.

◆ *Arrest of Congress leaders*

The government was put in a difficult situation. If it did not put down a movement that disobeyed the law, people would question its administrative competence, and its ability to maintain control would be exposed. If it suppressed it, it would be perceived as an anti-people, violent government that employed force against peaceful protestors. Congress would cry "repression" or "victory" depending on the degree of their intervention, which caused the British government's hegemony to crumble.

◆ *Government in dilemma*

The government faced pressure from officials, Governors,



◆ *Arrest of Gandhiji*

and the Military to demonstrate the force behind the benevolent facade of the movement. On 4 May, the Viceroy Lord Irwin ordered Gandhiji's arrest, which was ill-conceived due to the timing of his arrest. Gandhiji's announcement of continuing his defiance of salt laws by raiding the Dharasana Salt Works forced the government's hand. The arrest had neither the advantage of an early strike nor allowed the government to reap the benefits of their policy of sitting it out. It only sparked the activity and caused endless problems for the government.

◆ *Protest against Gandhiji's arrest*

The arrest of Gandhiji led to a massive protest in Bombay, with thousands of textile and railway workers joining the protest. Cloth merchants went on a six-day hartal while clashes and firings occurred in Calcutta and Delhi. In Sholapur, Maharashtra, the textile workers went on strike on 7 May, burning liquor shops and attacking government symbols like railway stations, law courts, police stations, and municipal buildings. They took over the city and established a parallel government, which could only be dislodged with martial law after 16 May.

◆ *Police atrocities*

On May 21, a band of 2000 Indians marched towards the police cordon that had sealed off the Dharasana Salt Works, led by Sarojini Naidu, the first Indian woman to become President of the Congress, and Imam Saheb, Gandhiji's companion from the South African struggle, as well as Gandhi's son, Manilal. The police rushed forward with lathis and attacked the non-resisting Satyagrahis, causing them to go down. The total number of casualties was 320, and two were dead, with no arms raised in defence.

◆ *New form of Salt Satyagraha*

The new form of Salt Satyagraha was adopted by the people, leading to mass actions in Bombay, Karnataka, and Madras. In Wadala, 15,000 people broke police cordons and carried salt, while 10,000 invaded Sanikatta Salt Works in Karnataka. In Madras, defiance led to clashes with police and a protest meeting, which was dispersed by lathi charges and firing, leaving three dead. The incident created a racial rift in the city, with even the most moderate Indians denouncing it and supporting the nationalists. In Andhra Village, women walked miles to carry salt, while old Gandhian *ashrams* in Bengal sustained a powerful Salt Satyagraha in Midnapore and coastal pockets. Orissa's districts of Balasore, Puri, and Cuttack continue to be active centres of illegal salt production.

◆ *Role of women*

Salt Satyagraha was the beginning of a series of defiance movements in India led by Gandhiji. He called for a boycott of foreign cloth and liquor shops, particularly urging women to play a leading role. Women in India demonstrated their strength and tenacity in 1930, standing outside liquor shops and opium dens, persuading customers and shopkeepers to change their ways. Women from various backgrounds, including young mothers, widows, and unmarried girls, were seen as the strongest and most committed to change.

◆ *No-tax campaign*

The liquor boycott led to a decrease in excise duty revenues and a new trend of cutting off toddy tree heads. The boycott was connected to the popular tradition of abstinence as an ideal and a symbol of prestige. Lower castes attempted to establish their upper caste status by abstaining from alcohol and eating meat, demonstrating the depth of this tradition. Eastern India experienced a new type of 'no-tax campaign', focusing on the refusal to pay the chowkidar tax, which was imposed on villages. Chowkidars were guards who supplemented the police force in rural areas and were criticised for acting as spies for the government and often as retainers for local landlords. The movement against this tax began in Bihar in May, as salt agitation had limited scope due to the province's isolated status.

◆ *Repression of the movement*

In the Monghyr, Saran, and Bhagalpur districts, the government refused tax, induced chowkidars to resign, and used social boycotts against those resisting. The government responded by confiscating property, beatings, and torture. On May 31, the police occupied the Congress *ashram* in Bihpur, Bihar, causing daily demonstrations outside the *ashram*. A mass rally was held by Rajendra Prasad and Abdul Bari but was broken up by a lathi charge. Repression strengthened the nationalists, and police were unable to enter rural areas. The monsoon season in Bengal led to anti-chowkidar and anti-Union Board protests due to difficulties in salt production. Villagers faced severe repression, losing thousands of rupees in property confiscation and destruction. They were forced to hide in forests for days to avoid police harassment.

◆ *Movement in Gujarat*

In Gujarat, Kheda district, Bardoli taluka in Surat district, and Jambusar in Broach, a no-tax movement was underway, demanding land revenue. Villagers crossed the border from British India, causing destruction and confiscation of their lands. Vallabhbhai Patel, provided support and encouragement to the hard-pressed peasants, who eventually returned to their homes in March 1931. Defiance of forest





laws in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Central Provinces, particularly in tribal areas, reached mass proportions, with crowds reaching above 70,000. Students in Assam launched an agitation against the infamous 'Cunningham circular', which forced students and their guardians to provide declarations of good behaviour.

◆ *National Flag-symbol of a new spirit*

Jawaharlal Nehru's raising of the national flag in Lahore in December 1929 sparked a wave of heroism in India. People in various regions, including Bundur, Calicut, and Surat, chose to defend the flag against severe brutalities. Tota Narasaiah Naidu, P. Krishna Pillai, and a group of children in Surat, India, used their ingenuity to defy the police by stitching khadi dresses in the three colours of the national flag. These 'living flags' paraded through the streets, challenging the police's attempts to seize the flag. The national flag became a symbol of the new spirit in India.

◆ *No rent, no revenue campaign*

In U.P., a 'no-revenue', 'no-rent' campaign was launched, calling on zamindars to refuse to pay government revenue and tenants not to pay rent to the zamindars. This became a no-rent struggle due to the zamindars' loyalty to the government. The movement gained momentum in October when Jawaharlal Nehru got the U.P. Congress Committee to sanction the campaign. The campaign was launched in December, but severe repression forced many peasants to flee villages, with Agra and Rae Bareilly districts being important centres.

◆ *Various forms of mobilisation*

The movement popularised various forms of mobilisation, including *Prabhat pheris*, in which groups of people sang nationalist songs at dawn, and *patrikas*, illegal news sheets that violated the Press Act. Magic lanterns were used to spread the message throughout the villages. Tours by leaders and workers, as well as public meetings, remained a feature of the movement. Children were organised into *vanar senas* or monkey armies, and girls even wanted their own separate *Manjari sena* or cat army. These forms of mobilisation aimed to defy the hated Press Act and promote nationalist sentiment.

◆ *Uncertain attitude of the government*

The government's attitude remained ambivalent throughout 1930. Gandhiji's arrest was the culmination of much deliberation. Ordinances restricting civil liberties were issued, allowing provincial governments to ban civil disobedience organisations. Congress Working Committees were not declared illegal until June, and Motilal Nehru remained free until that date. Local Congress Committees



were not prohibited until August. The Simon Commission report, which was regressive and lacked Dominion Status, aggravated moderate political opinion.

◆ *First Round  
Table Conference*

Madan Mohan Malaviya and M.S. Aney were arrested, but the Viceroy on 7 July suggested a Round Table Conference and reaffirmed the goal of Dominion Status. He accepted suggestions from forty Central Legislature members, such as Tej Bahadur Sapru and M.R. Jayakar, to mediate between Congress and the Government. Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru visited Gandhiji in Yerwada jail, but no agreement was reached. Some political opinions attended the Round Table Conference in London in November. The first-ever London proceedings between the British and Indians, as equals, highlighted the importance of an olive branch to Congress for the Government's survival strategy. The British Prime Minister hinted at this possibility and expressed hope that Congress would participate in the next round of deliberations. On 25 January, the Viceroy announced the unconditional release of Gandhiji and the other members of the Congress Working Committee.

◆ *Gandhi-Irwin  
Pact*

Following three weeks of deliberation, Gandhiji was authorised by the Congress Working Committee to begin discussions with the Viceroy. The fortnight-long discussions culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which was referred to as a "truce" or a "provisional settlement" on 5 March 1931. The Pact, signed by Gandhiji and Lord Irwin, put the Congress on equal footing with the Government. It included the release of political prisoners, remission of fines, return of confiscated lands, and lenient treatment for resigned government employees. The Government also granted salt production rights to coastal villages and peaceful picketing. Gandhiji's demand for a public inquiry into police excesses was recorded in the agreement. The Congress agreed to discontinue the Civil Disobedience Movement and participate in the next Round Table Conference.

◆ *Criticism of the  
Pact*

The signing of the Pact, its timing, Gandhi's motives, and his refusal to condition it on the commutation of Bhagat Singh's death sentence have sparked significant controversies and debate among historians. The Pact has been criticised as a betrayal, indicating the Indian bourgeoisie's fluctuating nature and Gandhiji's adherence to bourgeois pressure. It is seen as a betrayal of peasants' interests as it did not immediately restore confiscated land. It has to be noted that the people's willingness to sacrifice was limited, and signs



of exhaustion could be seen throughout the movement. In towns, shopkeepers and merchants struggled to bear losses, and their support began to decrease by September 1930. Rural India experienced occasional instances of resistance and clashes with police, as did Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat.

◆ *Significance of the Movement*

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-31 was a historic turning point in the anti-imperialist struggle, with over 90,000 people imprisoned, a significant increase from the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22. Imports of cloth and cigarettes decreased, government income from liquor excise and land revenue was affected, and elections to the Legislative Assembly were effectively boycotted. Various social groups politicised Indian nationalism, with urban elements such as merchants, shopkeepers, and students in Tamil Nadu and Punjab, peasants in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Andhra, and Bihar, tribals in Central Provinces, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Bengal, and workers in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras taking part in mass demonstrations and leading in Sholapur.

◆ *Mass participation*

Because of the efforts of communal leaders and government encouragement of dispute, the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bangladesh was significantly less extensive than it was in 1920-22. Muslim participation was still significant, especially in the North-West Frontier Province. Middle-class Muslim participation was high in Senhatta, Tripura, Gaibandha, Bagura, and Noakhali, while Muslim students, shopkeepers, and lower-income individuals supported the movement in Dacca. Muslim women from the middle and upper classes were also active. The Muslim weaving communities in Bihar, Delhi, and Lucknow successfully mobilised Muslims from the lower classes. The movement received strong support from the poor and illiterate, both in town and across the country, which was evident from the jail records of prisoners. For Indian women, the movement was a liberating experience, marking their entrance into public life.

## Summarised Overview

After Gandhi's arrest in March 1922, nationalist ranks disintegrated, and Congressmen debated the end of the boycott of legislative councils. The 'Swarajists' sought to end or mend these councils, while the 'No Changers' opposed council entry. The differences led to the defeat of the Swarajists' proposal at the Gaya session of Congress in December 1922. The Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party was formed, with C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru as its President and Secretary, respectively.

The Swarajists argued for the entry of nationalists into councils to maintain non-cooperation, energise the masses, deter government interference, and serve as an arena for political struggle. Both sides sought a united front to force government reforms, and Gandhi's leadership was crucial. A compromise was reached in Delhi in September 1923, allowing Swarajists to contest elections and accept the Congress programme with only one condition: joining legislative councils. The Swarajists won 40 seats in the centre and a majority in the provincial assembly in the November 1923 elections. They voted against the government, introduced adjournment motions, and advocated for self-government, civil liberties, and industrialisation. In 1924, both sides agreed that Swarajists would work in councils as an integral part of Congress.

The Simon Commission, an all-white, seven-member Indian Statutory Commission, was appointed by the British government to study India's governance scheme. The Indian response was angered by the exclusion of Indians from the commission and the idea of foreigners deciding India's fitness for self-government. In 1928, Motilal Nehru led a subcommittee to draft a constitution for India, which recommended a "dominion status" and joint electorates for Muslims. However, the report faced controversies over communal representation, leading to the 'Fourteen Points' of Jinnah.

In 1928, Congress approved the Nehru Report, but younger Indians demanded complete independence. Gandhi and Nehru hoped for a two-year grace period but reduced it to one. If the government refused, Congress would demand complete independence and launch a Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhi's travels led to the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee and the Simon Commission report. Lord Irwin's declaration and the Delhi Manifesto were rejected. Jawaharlal Nehru was nominated as president for the Lahore session of Congress in December 1929, which included boycotting the Round Table Conference, declaring complete independence, allowing the Congress Working Committee to launch a civil disobedience program, and asking all members of parliament to resign their seats. January 26, 1930, was set as the first Independence Day, and Nehru hoisted the tricolour flag of freedom. Gandhi presented 11 demands to the government and gave a request in January 1930, leading to the march through Gujarat and breaking the salt law. The movement spread across India, leading to a decline in foreign cloth imports, loss of income from liquor, excise, and land revenue, and



boycotted elections to the Legislative Assembly. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, signed in Delhi, placed the Congress on equal footing with the government.

Gandhi's suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement was not a retreat, as mass movements are short-lived, sacrifices are limited, and signs of exhaustion are evident. Although youth were disappointed and peasants were disappointed, many were jubilant that the government treated their movement as significant and signed a pact with Gandhi.

## Assignments

1. Discuss the factors that led to the formation of the Swarajist Party. Analyse how the Swarajist party used the council entry as a tool of protest against British rule.
2. Write a short note on the Simon Commission.
3. What were the main provisions and recommendations of the Nehru Report, and how did it contribute to the discourse on constitutional reforms in British India?
4. Analyse the context that led to the formulation of the Fourteen Points and its significance.
5. Discuss the significance of the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress in 1929 as a landmark event in the history of the Indian national movement.
6. Analyse the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the Civil Disobedience Movement of India. Discuss the significance of the Salt Satyagraha within the context of the Civil Disobedience Movement.
7. Critically analyse the Gandhi- Irwin Pact.

## Suggested Reading

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4. M.Judith Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, OUP, 1994.

5. Prasad, Ishwari, *A History of Modern India*, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, 2018.

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2. Chandra, Bipan, *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books, 1998.
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5. M. Judith, Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics 1928–1934*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
6. Majumdar, R.C., *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol.III & IV, South Asia Books, 1998.
7. Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India, 1887-1947*, McMillan, Madras, 1983.

## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





SGOU

# Emergence of New Forces and Struggle Towards Independence

**BLOCK-04**



## Emergence of Socialist Ideas

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner would be able to:

- ◆ understand the emergence and impact of socialist ideas in India
- ◆ analyse the growth and significance of trade unions and peasant movements
- ◆ examine the revolutionary activities led by the HSRA
- ◆ recognise the contributions of women in revolutionary movements

### Background

The late 19th and early 20th centuries in India witnessed tremendous change and growing discontent. As industrialisation spread across the country, it brought with it rapid economic growth but also stark inequalities. Factories began to spring up, drawing large numbers of workers who toiled for long hours in harsh conditions with little pay. Imagine working in a hot, crowded factory for 12 hours a day, with no breaks and no security. These difficult conditions led to the first labour protests. Initially, these protests were unorganised, driven by the immediate need for better wages and working conditions. However, nationalist leaders soon saw an opportunity to unite these labour struggles with the broader fight against British rule. They understood that by linking the workers' demands for justice with the larger goal of independence, they could create a powerful movement that challenged both economic and political oppression.

At the same time, in the rural heartlands of India, another kind of struggle was taking shape. The peasants, who formed the backbone of the country, were suffering under heavy taxes and oppressive landlords. Movements like the Kisan Movement in Awadh and the Mappila uprising became important forces in connecting these local grievances with the national struggle for Independence. Picture the vast fields where farmers worked tirelessly, only to have most of their harvest taken away by colonial authorities. These peasant movements rallied the rural population against colonialism.



Meanwhile, a different kind of resistance was brewing among the youth. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) was formed by young revolutionaries who believed that non-violent protest alone was not enough to achieve freedom. They were inspired by socialist ideas and felt that direct action, including targeted assassinations of British officials, was necessary to disrupt colonial rule. Their daring actions, although carried out in secrecy, sent shockwaves through the British administration and inspired many young Indians, including women like Pritilata Wadadar and Kalpana Dutt, to take up arms against the oppressors.

This unit will take you through the pathways of these diverse movements – the labour struggles in the factories, the peasant movements, and the actions of the young revolutionaries. By examining these struggles, we will see how they all contributed to the major goal of India's independence and laid the foundation for a new, free nation.

## Keywords

Socialism, Trade Unions, Peasant Movements, Revolutionary Movements, HSRA, Women's Role

## Discussion

### 4.1.1 Trade Union Movements

#### 4.1.1.1 Origins of Trade Unions in India

##### ♦ *Early labour agitations*

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of modern industry, railways, postal systems, and telegraphs in India. It facilitated the emergence of the modern working class in India. The workers became organised and self-conscious, and the Indian National Movement grew. Before the nationalist intelligentsia began to be involved in working-class agitations, several agitations, including strikes in the textile mills of various cities, including Bombay, Calcutta, Surat, Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Madras and Wardha, occurred. Apart from this, workers in the railways and plantations also protested. However, these agitations were caused by immediate economic grievances without a political overtone.

During the 1870s, philanthropists made some attempts to improve the condition of the workers. In 1878, Sorabjee Shapoorji Bengalee attempted to introduce a bill to limit



◆ *Efforts of philanthropists*

the working hours. Sasipada Banerjee, a Brahmo social reformer, founded the Workingmen's Club in 1870 and published 'Bharat Sramjeebi' (Indian Labour) to educate workers. Narayan Meghajee Lokhande launched the Anglo-Marathi weekly 'DinaBandhu' (Friend of the Poor) in 1880 and established the Bombay Mill and Millhands' Association in 1890. He also organised worker's meetings and submitted demands to the Bombay Factory Commission. However, these efforts were not in the manner of an organised labour movement. Moreover, these philanthropists were not part of the national movement.

◆ *Changing attitudes of nationalists*

◆ *Support for workers in British enterprises*

Initially, the mainstream nationalist movement in India focused on the broader struggle against British rule, often overlooking the issues of labourers. According to Bipan Chandra, early nationalists exhibited a 'lukewarm attitude' toward workers' grievances to avoid divisions within the anti-imperialist front. At the second session of the Indian National Congress in 1886, Dadabhai Naoroji emphasised focusing on issues that involved the entire nation and leaving class-specific issues to be dealt with separately. As the movement gained momentum, leaders with a 'pro-labour orientation' began advocating for better labour organisation and bargaining power. However, nationalists were still hesitant to address conflicts between labourers and employers. They realised that the government labour legislation was a tactic of the British manufacturers to curb Indian competition and opposed it. Bipan Chandra argues that nationalists possessed a fear that labour laws might hinder industrialisation, which they considered crucial in alleviating poverty. However, their attitude towards the case of the Indian workers in the British-owned enterprises was different. There, they fully addressed the issues of workers, as the employers were not a part of the country. For instance, the nationalist newspaper 'Mahratta', influenced by radical thinker G.S. Agarkar, supported the causes of the workers and urged the mill owners to make concessions. The Indian National Congress and nationalist newspapers addressed the exploitation of tea plantation workers in Assam by launching a campaign. These workers faced severe mistreatment. European planters were granted extensive powers to arrest and punish them.

The first major organised strike by Indian workers occurred in May 1899 among signallers of the British-owned Great Indian Peninsular (GIP) Railway. Issues such as wages and working conditions were the reasons behind the strike. It garnered widespread support from nationalist newspapers,



◆ *GIP Railway strike (1899)*

such as Tilak's Mahratta and Kesari. Also, prominent nationalists like Pherozechah Mehta, D.E. Wacha, and Surendranath Tagore organised public meetings and fund collections in support of the strikers.

◆ *Swadeshi Movement*

Gradually, nationalist leaders like B.C. Pal and G. Subramania Iyer began to advocate for legislative protections for workers. In 1903, Iyer encouraged workers to form unions and called on the public to support these efforts. The Swadeshi Upsurge of 1903-1908 was a significant period for the labour movement. It was characterised by a rise in strikes and the emergence of labour organisations. Swadeshi leaders like B.C. Pal, C.R. Das, and Liaquat Hussain actively supported labour struggles. Apart from them, Aswinicoomar Banerjea, Prabhat Kumar Roy Chowdhury, Premtosh Bose, and Apurba Kumar Ghose were involved in organising workers in industries dominated by foreign capital or the colonial state. In Calcutta, labour strikes became frequent. Widespread donations of money and food items to the strikers were evidence of public support. Moreover, there were widespread attempts to form all-India unions.

◆ *Strikes, hartals and riots*

During the Swadeshi period, the focus of the labour movements shifted from merely economic issues to broader political questions. This period witnessed significant strikes and hartals, particularly the 'national upsurge' on October 16, 1905, the day the partition of Bengal was enacted. Workers in various industries, including jute mills, railways, and the Bum Company shipyard in Howrah, struck work in solidarity with nationalist causes. In Tamil Nadu, Subramania Siva launched a strike in a foreign-owned cotton mill in Tuticorin in 1908. He emphasised the potential of strikes to undermine foreign enterprises. The arrests of Siva and Chidambaram Pillai incited widespread strikes and riots in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli. In Punjab, workers at the Rawalpindi arsenal and railway engineering sectors joined the nationalist upsurge in 1907, which resulted in the deportation of Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh.

◆ *Influence of socialist ideas*

Meanwhile, the radical nationalists, who were influenced by the contemporary Marxist and social democratic movements in Europe, had an early influence on socialist ideas. They were inspired by the Russian working-class movement, which was considered an effective political protest mechanism. However, the labour movement waned after the 1908 national upsurge.



#### 4.1.1.2 Formation of AITUC

##### ◆ Establishment of AITUC

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a revival in working-class activity closely linked to broader nationalist movements. Against the background of the 1915 Home Rule Leagues and Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919, the national movement reached a peak during the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat Movements of 1920-22. Meanwhile, the workers began to organise on a national level, which culminated in the formation of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1920. Prominent nationalist leaders supported the establishment of AITUC. It was facilitated by Lokamanya Tilak, who had close ties with Bombay's working class. Lala Lajpat Rai, an important extremist leader from Punjab, became its first president, and Dewan Chaman Lal became the General Secretary. The AITUC's manifesto encouraged workers to take an active role in the national movement, emphasising that political freedom would be meaningless without economic liberation. Lajpat Rai was one of the earliest voices to emphasise the link between capitalism and imperialism, recognising the crucial role of the working class in resisting both forces.

##### ◆ Nationalist support

Prominent nationalists such as C.R. Das, Subhas Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Satyamurti became closely associated with the AITUC. During its Gaya session in 1922, the Indian National Congress endorsed the formation of the AITUC and established a committee consisting of leading Congressmen to assist in their activities. C.R. Das emphasised the importance of organising labour and peasantry both for their interests and for the greater goal of Swaraj (self-rule). He warned that their disassociation from the independence struggle would lead to class struggles among them.

##### ◆ Participation of workers in strikes

By 1920, there were 125 unions and 250,000 members in AITUC. In response to colonial oppression, workers actively participated in national political events, including strikes and agitations. In April 1919, after the crackdown in Punjab and Gandhi's imprisonment, workers in Ahmedabad and other areas of Gujarat went on strikes and protests. This ended up in violence and casualties. In Ahmedabad, some of the government buildings were set on fire, trains were derailed, and telegraph lines were broken.

##### ◆ Railway workers's strikes

Another important group of the working class was the railway workers, who went on strike for economic demands and against racial discrimination and often came in support of various anti-colonial struggles. In April 1919, the North Western Railway workers called for a general strike,

supported by the northern areas.

◆ *Protest during Prince of Wales's visit*

In November 1921, during the visit of the Prince of Wales, the Congress called for a countrywide general strike. Especially in Bombay, a large number of workers participated in the widespread protests by closing the textile factories and were involved in riots and attacks.

◆ *Gandhi and the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association*

One of the major developments during this period was Gandhi's foundation of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association (TLA) in 1918. The TLA had 14,000 members, and it was probably one of the largest trade unions of its time. Gandhi's philosophy of trusteeship and arbitration aimed to mediate between workers and capitalists. He emphasised the role of the mill owners as trustees of the workers' interests. He advocated for the rights of workers and wage hikes, believing that the workers were the true masters of the mills.

◆ *Decline and resurgence*

The working-class movement was dormant after 1922 and focused solely on economic issues. However, in the late 1920s, a new surge of action began to emerge within the national movement, driven by the rise of a powerful Left Bloc.

#### 4.1.1.3 Trade Union Movements in India

◆ *Workers' and Peasants' Parties (WPP)*

The latter half of the 1920s witnessed a major upsurge in the trade union movement in India, largely because of the convergence of various leftist ideologies that began to have a considerable influence on the national movement. By 1927, a number of Communist groups from all across India had unified under the banner of Workers' and Peasants' Parties (WPP), led by prominent figures including S.A. Dange, Sohan Singh Josh, Muzaffar Ahmed and P.C. Joshi. These parties gathered swift traction at the provincial and national levels of the Indian National Congress and functioned as a left-wing faction within the Congress.

◆ *Communist influence*

The Communist influence in the trade union movement increased dramatically by the end of 1928. During this period, Bombay witnessed the rise of the Girni Kamgar Union (GKU) in the wake of a historic six-month-long general strike led by textile workers. By the end of 1928, the GKU's membership had increased from 324 to 54,000, a clear demonstration of the growing Communist sway over labourers. This trend permeated to a number of industries, including municipalities in Bengal and Bombay, Burma Oil Company in Madras, railways and jute mills. By the time



of the 1928 Jharia session of AITUC, the Left, including Communists, had gathered a leading position. As a result, they broke away from the corporatist group headed by N.M. Joshi.

◆ *Suppressive laws*

Between 1922 and 1929, workers influenced by Communist and radical nationalist ideas participated in a number of strikes and protests throughout India. In November 1927, the AITUC resolved to boycott the Simon Commission, which led to a large mobilisation of workers for the protests. On May Day, Lenin Day, and the anniversary of the Russian Revolution, workers held huge gatherings. The growing militancy and political engagement of the working class alarmed the colonial government. In response, the government launched a dual strategy: it passed suppressive legislation like the Trade Disputes Act and the Public Safety Act. It arrested important leaders from the radical labour movement in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Simultaneously, the government made concessions, like appointing the Royal Commission on Labour in 1929, in an effort to subjugate certain sections of the labour movement.

◆ *Setbacks and Shifts*

Despite the early success, the labour movement experienced substantial defeats because of government oppression and a tactical change by the Communist-led group. By the end of 1928, Communists faced isolation, and their influence began to diminish as a result of distancing themselves from the course of a national movement. By the end of 1929, there were only about 800 GKU members left, compared to 54,000 at the end of 1928. During the split in 1931, the Communists were finally driven out of the AITUC. According to a 1930 CPI document, the consequences of this break from the national movement, particularly the Civil Disobedience Movement, was that they 'left the field entirely to the Congress' and withdrew from civil disobedience, confined themselves to a small group. The result was that the workers began to follow the Congress as the only organisation continuing the fight against imperialism.

Despite the Communists' withdrawal, workers continued to take an active role in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Mill workers in Madras, dock workers in Karachi, and Textile workers in Solapur fought against the government. Textile workers in Solapur revolted from May 7 to May 16, 1930, after police opened fire on an anti-British march. For several days, insurgents seized control of the city administration and stormed government buildings, courts, police stations, and



◆ *Workers in the Civil Disobedience Movement*

railway stations. The government had to impose martial law in order to control the rebels, which led to the raising of the national flag over the town and the long-term imprisonment or hanging of a number of workers. On February 4, 1930, approx. Twenty thousand workers, primarily from the GIP Railway, went on strike. On April 6, 1930, the day Gandhi breached the salt law, workers from the GIP Railway Men's Union launched a new form of Satyagraha by lying on the tracks with red flags displayed in front of them. This act prompted police fire in order to clear the tracks. On July 6, the Congress Working Committee declared 'Gandhi Day' as a form of protest against the widespread arrests carried out by the British authorities. In response to this call, about 50,000 people participated in a hartal (strike) on that day. The protest witnessed the involvement of employees from forty-nine factories ceasing work to show their solidarity with the movement.

**Trade Union Movements in India (1931-1942)**

◆ *Revival and Growth (1937-1939)*

In the early 1930s, there was a downturn in the Indian working-class movement. Workers mostly disengaged from major campaigns, such as the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932-1934. However, between 1937 and 1939, while popular ministries were established and provincial autonomy was introduced, it coincided with a rise in the working-class movement. The Communists abandoned their previous sectarian strategy during this period and reintegrated into the nationalist movement, eventually rejoining the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1935. This change created the possibility for leftist influence to grow rapidly within the trade union movement and nationalist politics.

◆ *Victories*

We can see that Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose played crucial roles in the consolidation of leftist forces within the Indian National Congress and other mass organisations when the campaign for the 1937 elections began; the AITUC, except for a few exceptions, backed Congress candidates. In their manifesto, Congress committed to address labour disputes and protect the rights of workers to organise unions and strike. During this time, the trade union movement had a notable increase in membership, rising from 261,047 to 399,159, while the number of unions increased from 271 to 362. The number of strikes also increased. Many of these strikes ended in the victories of workers because of the enhanced support from





◆ *World War II and the Trade Union Movement*

the Congress provincial governments.

The outbreak of World War II, on September 3, 1939, further incited the Indian working class. On October 2, 1939, approx. ninety thousand workers in Bombay joined for one of the world's earliest anti-war strikes. In spite of severe governmental repression intended to preserve the war effort, nationwide strikes on economic issues have occurred.

◆ *The Quit India Movement and worker involvement*

The situation took a dramatic turn with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. The Communists argued that the nature of the war had transformed from an imperialist conflict to a people's war and necessitated support for the Allied powers to defeat Fascism. As a result, the Communist Party separated itself from the Quit India Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942. They also successfully maintained a policy of 'industrial peace' with employers, ensuring that production and the war effort were not disrupted. This approach helped to avoid conflicts between workers and employers, allowing industries to continue functioning smoothly during a critical time. Despite the stance of the Communist Party, the Quit India Movement considerably affected the working class. Workers in various cities, including Delhi, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bombay, and Ahmedabad, participated in strikes and hartals when Gandhi and other activists were arrested on August 9, 1942. The workers at the Tata Steel Plant demanded the formation of a national government before they resumed work, causing the plant to close for thirteen days. In Ahmedabad, a three-month-long textile strike happened. While areas with strong Communist influence witnessed lesser involvement, numerous Communist rank-and-file members disobeyed the party line. They joined the Quit India Movement, which demonstrated the broad support for the fight against British rule.

### **Trade Union Movements in India (1945-1947)**

The period between 1945 and 1947 marked a resurgence in working-class activities in India. It was driven by the political and economic upheavals of the post-war era. After World War II, workers participated in many protests and demonstrations in places like Calcutta. Moreover, the trials of the Indian National Army (INA) sparked unrest, and they opposed the actions of the British government. One notable incident that happened during this period was the refusal of dock workers in Bombay and Calcutta to load ships

◆ *Post-war resurgence of worker activism*

bound for Indonesia. Those ships were carrying supplies for British troops who were entrusted with curbing national liberation movements in Southeast Asia. This act of defiance highlighted the growing solidarity among Indian workers with global anti-colonial struggles.

◆ *Solidarity with the Naval Mutiny of 1946*

Another important episode was the Bombay workers' strike and hartal supporting the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) mutiny in February 1946. Responding to a call from the Communist Party, nearly three hundred thousand workers stopped work on February 22. Even though it was peaceful, the demonstrations turned into violent confrontations with the police and army. Barricades were erected, and the government had to deploy two army battalions to restore order. The entire incident culminated in the deaths of around 250 agitators.

◆ *Economic strikes and growing discontent*

The later years of British rule in India witnessed an all-India strike by Post and Telegraph Department employees. The economic grievances caused by the war were due to the post-war demobilisation, high prices, food scarcity, and declining real wages. These conditions pushed the working class to its limits and led to widespread strikes. They anticipated independence as an end to their hardships, improved economic conditions, and better rights.

◆ *Major peasant movements*

### 4.1.2 Growth of Peasant Movements

One of the well-known features of the nineteenth century was the peasant discontent with the authorities. However, the movements that sprang out from such discontent were deeply influenced by and impacted the ongoing struggle for national independence. Let us have a look at the major peasant movements in the early twentieth century: the Bardoli Satyagraha in Gujarat, the Mappila rebellion in Malabar, and the Kisan movement and Eka movements in Awadh.

After the annexation of Awadh in 1856, the taluqdars (or large landlords) strengthened their hold over the agrarian society. This resulted in oppressive practices such as exorbitant rents, unlawful levies, renewal fees (*nazrana*), and arbitrary evictions (*bedakhli*). During and after World War I, the prices of food and necessities went high, which led to resistance from tenants. The Home Rule League in the U.P. were the first to organise the peasants along contemporary lines into kisan sabhas (peasant associations). Indra Narain Dwivedi, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and Gauri Shankar Misra



◆ *Leadership and mobilisation*

worked together to form the U.P. Kisan Sabha in February 1918. The Sabha had established at least 450 branches in 173 tehsils throughout the province by June 1919. Many peasant delegates from the U.P. attended the Indian National Congress sessions in Delhi and Amritsar in December 1918 and 1919. However, the beginning of the grassroots peasant movement was marked by the social boycott (*nai-dhobi band*) in Pratapgarh district towards the end of 1919. By mid-1920, Kisan meetings organised by village panchayats became common in Taluqdari Awadh.

◆ *Village visits*

Baba Ramchandra, a former indentured labourer in Fiji, emerged as a main leader during this period. Ramchandra, who was originally a Maharashtrian Brahmin, had settled in Faizabad in 1909 and travelled as a sadhu, reciting verses from Tulsidas' Ramayana. In June 1920, Ramchandra brought several tenants from Jaunpur and Pratapgarh to Allahabad. It was there that he met Gauri Shankar Misra and Jawaharlal Nehru. He urged them to visit the villages to witness the living conditions of tenants. As a result, Nehru visited rural areas between June and August 1920.

#### 4.1.2.1 The Kisan Movement in Awadh

◆ *Setbacks and resilience*

The Kisan movement in Awadh gathered strength when Mehta, the Deputy Commissioner of Pratapgarh, promised to investigate their grievances. During this time, Gauri Shankar Misra attempted to reach an agreement with Mehta on major tenant issues such as arbitrary evictions (*bedakhli*) and renewal fees (*nazrana*). In August 1920, while Mehta was away on leave, the taluqdars took advantage of the circumstances to suppress the Kisan movement. They fabricated theft charges against Baba Ramchandra and thirty-two farmers, which led to their arrest. This enraged the *kisans*, and as a result, around 5,000 of them gathered at Pratapgarh to see the arrested leaders in jail. Later, when a rumour of Gandhi's visit to negotiate the release of Ramchandra brought ten to twenty thousand *kisans* to Pratapgarh. While their numbers reached sixty thousand, Mehta was recalled from leave to deal with the situation. He withdrew the theft case and pressured the landlords to change.

The Congress at Calcutta adopted the path of non-cooperation, which resonated with many U.P. nationalists. However, some, like Madan Mohan Malaviya, favoured constitutional struggle. This difference in approach was evident at the U.P. Kisan Sabha. This prompted the Non-

◆ *Political alignments and organisational strength*

Cooperators to form an alternative Oudh Kisan Sabha at Pratapgarh on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1920. By the end of October, this new body had successfully brought together over 330 kisan sabhas thanks to the efforts of Misra, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mata Badal Pande, Baba Ramchandra, Deo Narayan Pande, and Kedar Nath.

◆ *Rallies and strength*

The Oudh Kisan Sabha asked the tenants to refuse to cultivate *bedakhli* land, reject unpaid labour (*hari* and *begar*), boycott non-compliers, and resolve disputes through panchayats. They held a rally in Ayodhya on 20 and 21 December 1920, attended by around 100,000 peasants, which was a display of their strength. Baba Ramchandra appeared bound in ropes to show the oppression of *kisans*. The movement included peasants from both higher and lower castes.

◆ *Shift towards violence and government suppression*

In January 1921, the districts of Rae Bareilly, Faizabad, and Sultanpur witnessed the looting of bazaars, houses, and granaries and ended up in clashes with the police. These incidents were often triggered by the arrests or rumours of arrests of leaders. These were led not by recognised Kisan Sabha activists but by sadhus, holy men, and ex-proprietors who were disinherited. The government immediately suppressed these violent outbreaks and dispersed crowds through firing, arrested leaders and activists, and launched cases against them. By the end of January, the movement had largely subsided. In March, the Seditious Meetings Act was introduced in the affected districts, which brought all political activities to a halt. Nationalists continued to defend tenants in courts, but larger political efforts were halted. The government enacted the Oudh Rent (Amendment) Act. However, it offered minimal relief and led to the decline of the movement.

#### 4.1.2.2 The Eka Movement

◆ *Revival of peasant discontent*

By the end of 1921, we can see that peasant unrest resurfaced in Awadh, especially in the northern districts of Hardoi, Bahraich, and Sitapur. This new wave of agitation, known as the Eka (unity) movement, was initially led by Congress and Khilafat leaders. The primary issues of the peasants included excessive rent rates, which were sometimes 50% higher than officially recorded, oppressive practices by *thekedars* (rent collectors), and the burden of share rents.

Religious rituals were an important part of the Eka



◆ *Religious rituals and oaths*

meetings. Peasants would dig a hole symbolising the Ganges River and fill it with water. This ceremony would be overseen by the priest. Peasants vowed during these meetings to only pay the recorded rent on time, to refuse forced labour, to fight eviction, to not aid criminals, and to follow panchayat decisions. These rites not only strengthened their unity but also gave the movement a sense of sacred responsibility.

◆ *Emergence of leadership*

The leadership of the Eka movement was distinct from the national leaders who initially supported it. At the forefront were leaders such as Madari Pasi, who represented lower-caste communities. Unlike the Congress and Khilafat leaders, these grassroots leaders deviated from the nationalist goal because they were less dedicated to nonviolence. As a result, the movement lost contact with nationalist leaders and started to find its course.

◆ *Nature of the movement*

The wider support gave the Eka movement an inclusive nature and attracted different sections of rural society to address their issues against the oppressive practices. In contrast to the earlier Kisan Sabha movement, which mainly involved tenants, the Eka movement included many small zamindars (i.e., landowners) who were also disappointed with the government because of high land revenue demands.

◆ *Government repression*

By March 1922, the authorities attempted severe repression methods, including arrests, violence, and strict enforcement of laws to curb the activities of the Eka movement. Such measures eventually brought an end to the movement. Even though the movement was active for a short period, it was persistent and displayed widespread dissatisfaction with colonial agrarian policies.

◆ *Catalysts for Resistance*

#### 4.1.2.3 The Mappila ‘Uprising’

In August 1921, the Malabar district of Kerala witnessed a major uprising by the Mappila (Muslim) tenants. Their grievances mostly included exorbitant rents, unsatisfactory tenancy, renewal charges, and landlords’ other harsh policies. Although Mappila resistance had a history back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the magnitude and severity of the 1921 uprising were unprecedented. The initial surge for the Mappila uprising originated at the Malabar District Congress Conference held at Manjeri in April 1920. The conference marked a shift in the position of Congress, which had previously been influenced by landlord interests, by supporting the demands of tenants for legislative measures that control landlord-tenant relations. As a result of this conference, tenants’ associations



were established and rapidly spread throughout the district.

♦ *The role of the  
Khilafat Movement*

Meanwhile, the Khilafat Movement, which sought to protect the Ottoman Caliphate, gathered strength in Malabar. The social base of the movement was mainly the Mappila tenants, even though it had several Hindu leaders. The increasing popularity of this united agitation made the government ban Khilafat meetings and arrest prominent Khilafat leaders in February 1921.

♦ *The spark of  
rebellion*

The Mappilas took action in response to the repression by the government and the rumours of British military weakness after World War I. The turning point occurred on August 20, 1921, when Ali Musaliar, the head of the Khilafat Committee, was taken into custody during a raid at the Tirurangadi mosque by Eranad District Magistrate E.F. Thomas. There was a great deal of resentment caused by the arrest of three Khilafat volunteers. Following the arrest, Mappilas from nearby areas gathered in Tirurangadi to call for the release of the arrested volunteers. Police interference culminated in a violent clash when they opened fire on the unarmed gathering. Government offices were destroyed, and treasuries were looted.

♦ *Spread and  
nature of the  
rebellion*

The rebellion quickly spread to the Mappila strongholds of Eranad, Valluvanad, and Ponnani taluks. Initially, the rebels targeted Hindu landlords, government institutions such as courts and police stations, and British planters and spared lenient landlords and poor Hindus. Leaders such as Kunhammed Haji intervened to defend Hindus and even punished 'insurgents' who attacked them. Haji also did not show preference towards Muslims and punished pro-government Mappilas as well.

♦ *Isolation and  
suppression*

However, the nature of the uprising changed when the British declared martial law and harsh repression followed. Many Hindus either supported the authorities or were forced to do so. Bipan Chandra argues that as the uprising became more desperate, it acquired communal overtones. When the nature of the uprising turned violent, a rift occurred between them and the Non-Cooperation Movement, which adhered to non-violence. By December 1921, the revolt had been put down by the British, but the Mappilas had suffered greatly. Official estimates recorded the number of Mappilas killed as 2,337, while unofficial estimates put the figure closer to 10,000. A total of 45,404 Mappilas were either captured or surrendered.



◆ *Peasant violence and nationalist responses*

In U.P., the initial momentum for the movements came from the Home Rule Leagues and was later reinforced by the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements. Similarly, in Malabar, the Khilafat movement had a huge influence on tenant agitations. During the height of unrest in both regions, it became difficult to distinguish between national political gatherings and peasant rallies. Peasants in both regions turned to violence in spite of their common objectives, which caused a rift between them and the national movement. Gandhi and other nationalist leaders often urged peasants to abstain from violence and drastic measures such as ceasing to pay rent to their landowners. This divergence in strategy has usually been seen as an expression of concern among the middle class or bourgeois leadership that the control of the movement might lay in the hands of more radical leaders.

#### 4.1.2.4 The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928

◆ *Role of Local Leaders*

The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 was a significant event in the history of Gujarat. It was rooted in the Non-Cooperation Movement of the early 1920s. Gandhi had planned a Civil Disobedience campaign in Bardoli taluq, in Surat district of Gujarat. However, the campaign was halted because of the Chauri - Chaura incident. Local leaders such as Kalyanji, Kunverji Mehta and Dayalji Desai played an active role in spreading the movement's message, establishing national schools, encouraging students to leave government institutions, and promoting boycotts of foreign goods and liquor shops. They also acquired control of the Surat municipality.

◆ *Upliftment efforts for the Kaliparaj*

Following Gandhi's criticism in 1922 for neglecting the lower-caste untouchables and tribal inhabitants, known as 'Kaliparaj', these leaders intensified their efforts for their upliftment. They established six ashrams across Bardoli taluq to work among the Kaliparaj. This work included learning their dialect, developing a 'Kaliparaj literature,' and addressing issues such as the Hali system (hereditary labour), intoxication, and expensive marriage ceremonies. Efforts were made to mobilise both the Kaliparaj and Ujaliparaj (high-caste) communities through *bhajan mandalis* and night schools.

In January 1926, Jayakar, the officer in charge of reassessing land taxes, suggested increasing the tax by 30%. Congress leaders were quick to oppose this and formed the Bardoli Inquiry Committee to look into the issue. The Committee found it unjustified and advised peasants to resist paying

◆ *The Bardoli Inquiry Committee*

the increased sum. Over time, as the limitations of the constitutional leadership became clear, the peasants began to support the ashram group more. Vallabhbhai Patel, who was persuaded to lead the group, organised the campaign by dividing Bardoli into thirteen areas, each managed by experienced leaders. The movement launched extensive propaganda efforts through meetings, speeches, and publications, particularly the daily Bardoli Satyagraha Patrika.

◆ *Resistance and victory*

The movement saw significant mass mobilisation, particularly of women and students, and used social pressure and threats of boycott to ensure unity and commitment. Sardar Patel and his supporters made continuous efforts to ensure they had the support of both moderate leaders and public opinion on all important issues. As a result, the government soon began losing even its supporters and neutral individuals, who started moving away from its side. By mid-1928, public opinion turned against the government, and Viceroy Lord Irwin pressured Governor Wilson to find a resolution. The members of the Legislative Councils of Surat provided a 'face-saving device', leading to an enquiry that ultimately reduced the land revenue to 6.03%. Gandhi succinctly described the significance of Bardoli Satyagraha: "Whatever the Bardoli struggle may be, it clearly is not a struggle for the direct attainment of Swaraj. That every such awakening, every such effort as that of Bardoli, will bring Swaraj nearer and may bring it nearer even than any direct effort is undoubtedly true."

#### 4.1.2.5 Peasant Mobilisation in the 1930s

◆ *Intensification of economic distress*

The Civil Disobedience Movement, beginning in the 1930s, saw a significant rise in peasant participation due to economic strain from the Great Depression. As crop prices fell, peasants struggled to pay taxes, rents, and debts at pre-Depression levels. This economic distress amplified the impact of protests against the Simon Commission and stirred widespread peasant agitation. In response, peasant leaders across India, such as Sahajanand, N.G. Ranga, and Indulal Yagnik, began organising peasant movements. In UP, peasants protested against eviction, increased rents, and forced labour, sometimes leading to militant actions. Gandhi's advice to pay part of the rent and send grievances to the Congress offices was often ignored, with many peasants ceasing payments altogether. In Bengal, Bankim Mukherji led protests against canal taxes. In Orissa and Punjab, strong



peasant movements emerged, addressing issues like revenue and land settlement. The movements also included salt manufacturing as a form of defiance against colonial laws and a boycott of foreign goods.

The Congress initially supported some peasant actions but struggled with balancing radical demands and broader unity. In 1931, the Congress allowed non-payment of rent in some districts, and by 1936, the Congress leaders endorsed the abolition of landlordism. The formation of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936, led by Sahajanand, demanded abolition of the zamindari system and tenant rights. This broad-based support helped Congress win the 1937 elections. Congress ministries, formed in several provinces in 1937, introduced reforms such as reducing debt burdens, regulating rent, and improving tenant rights. However, Congress's conservative stance and failure to fully address peasant grievances led to dissatisfaction. In Bihar, peasant movements led by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha faced oppression from both landlords and the police force. By 1938, the Congress' right-wing faction sought to limit the influence of radical leftists and peasant militancy. The Haripura session of the Congress prohibited members from joining Kisan Sabhas, and the party's conservative approach curtailed peasant activism. The combination of repression and lack of commitment to radical reforms led to the decline of peasant movements.

◆ *Congress support*

◆ *Opposition and suppression*

### 4.1.3 Revolutionary Movements during the 1920s

During the 1920s, many revolutionary groups in India began reorganising their underground activities. Some of these groups decided to work alongside the Congress, allowing them to reach the masses and provide organisational support to Congress in both towns and villages. By cooperating with C.R. Das in his Swarajist movement, these revolutionaries gained further influence. However, after C.R. Das died in 1925, the Bengal Congress split into two factions: one led by J.M. Sengupta, supported by the Anushilan group, and the other led by Subhas Chandra Bose, backed by the Yugantar group.

◆ *Reorganisation of activities*

◆ *Attempted assassination and Government repression*

One of the notable actions during this period was an assassination attempt on Charles Tegart, the notorious Calcutta Police Commissioner, by Gopinath Saha in 1924. Unfortunately, the attempt failed, and another person named Day was killed instead. In response, the British government,

empowered by a new ordinance, cracked down heavily on the revolutionaries, leading to the arrest of many, including Subhas Chandra Bose. Gopinath Saha was captured and subsequently hanged for his actions.

◆ *Setback and regrouping of revolutionaries*

The combination of government repression and internal disagreements among revolutionary factions led to a temporary decline in revolutionary activities. However, many revolutionaries did not give up and began regrouping to continue their fight against British rule. Among these newly formed groups, the Chittagong group, led by Surya Sen, became one of the most active and well-known revolutionary groups during this period.

#### 4.1.3.1 Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)

◆ *Socio-economic and political context*

During the interwar period, India witnessed an evolution in revolutionary ideologies and strategies. Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) emerged from the broader anti-colonial sentiment and disillusionment with the limitations of peaceful protests. HSRA sought to reshape India's struggle for independence through militant and socialist principles. During the 1920s and 1930s, India was undergoing deep socio-economic disparities caused by colonial policies. World War I incited a nationalist fervour, which led to widespread discontent against British rule. Economic exploitation, agrarian distress, and limited political representation fuelled dissent among Indian youth, particularly students and intellectuals.

◆ *Hindustan Republican Association/Army*

In the Punjab- United Provinces - Bihar region, revolutionary activity was led by the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA), later renamed the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). The HRA was founded in October 1924 in Kanpur by Ramprasad Bismil, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, and Sachin Sanyal. Their goal was to organise an armed revolution to overthrow the British colonial government and establish the Federal Republic of the United States of India based on adult voting rights.

◆ *Kakori Robbery (August 1925)*

The most significant action by the HRA was the Kakori robbery. In August 1925, members of the HRA stopped a train near the village of Kakori, close to Lucknow, and looted its official railway cash. Following this, the government launched a crackdown, leading to the arrest of many revolutionaries. Seventeen were jailed, four were sentenced to life in prison, and four—Bismil, Ashfaqullah, Roshan





Singh, and Rajendra Lahiri—were hanged. The Kakori incident was a major setback for the revolutionaries.

◆ *Formation of HSRA*

After the setback of the Kakori train robbery, a group of young revolutionaries, inspired by socialist ideas, aimed to reorganise their movement. In September 1928, they held a historic meeting at the ruins of Ferozshah Kotla in Delhi, where they decided to change the name of the Hindustan Republic Association (HRA) to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). This new name reflected their commitment to socialism. The key figures at this meeting included leaders like Chandra Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwaticharan Vohra, and others from different parts of India. The HSRA adopted a collective leadership structure and set socialism as their official goal.

◆ *Formation and ideological foundations of HSRA*

HSRA, founded in 1928, marked a shift from earlier revolutionary groups by openly advocating for socialist principles and organising armed resistance against British colonialism. The ideological underpinnings of the association were rooted in Marxist thought, which emphasised the abolition of capitalist exploitation and the establishment of a classless society. The manifesto of HSRA mentioned a vision for nationalising key industries and infrastructure to reduce economic inequalities created by colonial policies.

◆ *From militancy to mass mobilisation*

Bhagat Singh was the main leader of HSRA and was renowned for his intellectual pursuit and distinct ideologies. Bhagat Singh's focus on Marxism from militant nationalism underlined a shift to mass mobilisation and substantial socio-economic changes. His scholarly interests included reading widely on socialism and revolutionary movements happening across the world. Even though HSRA was initially associated with acts of terrorism, including the Assembly Bomb case and the Lahore Conspiracy case, it evolved under the direction of Bhagat Singh to prioritise mass movements. Bhagat Singh co-founded the Punjab Naujawan Bharat Sabha in order to interact with workers, peasants, and youth through political talks and group activities after realising the need for more public support. This shift was a strategic turn toward the integration of popular mobilisation and revolutionary goals.

HSRA's ideological development and methods were a matter of debate within the nationalist movement and among contemporary historians. Critics argued that militant tactics affected the unity within the Indian National Congress-led

◆ *Criticisms and debates*

independence movement. Historians such as Bipan Chandra have noted these internal tensions while recognising the role of HSRA in spreading revolutionary ideas in India.

◆ *Decline of revolutionary terrorism*

The decline of revolutionary terrorism in India marked a turning point in the nationalist struggle against British rule. Government crackdowns, arrests, and encounters such as the death of Chandrashekhar Azad in 1931 and Surya Sen's martyrdom in Bengal marked the virtual end of militant activities in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal. These events precipitated a period of introspection and ideological reevaluation among surviving revolutionaries incarcerated in jails and the Andaman Islands.

◆ *Transition to Marxism and Socialist Ideals*

Amidst government actions and ideological shifts, many former revolutionaries turned towards Marxist and socialist principles. Influenced by their experiences and readings during imprisonment, they sought a new path focused on mass mobilisation and class struggle. This ideological shift led several former revolutionaries to join the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), and other leftist organisations. Others aligned themselves with the Gandhian faction within the Indian National Congress, emphasising non-violent Civil Disobedience and broader political participation.

◆ *Limitations and Contributions of Revolutionary Terrorism*

The politics of revolutionary terrorism, while marked by courage and patriotism, faced severe limitations. Primarily, their approach lacked mass appeal and failed to mobilise widespread political actions among the Indian population. Despite this, their acts of sacrifice and resistance played a crucial role in fostering nationalist consciousness across the country. In northern India particularly, the influence of socialist ideals owes much to their pioneering efforts, laying the groundwork for future socio-political movements.

◆ *The Murder of Saunders (December 1928)*

#### **4.1.3.2 Major Revolutionary Activities of HSRA**

The HSRA was initially moving away from individual acts of violence. However, the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, a respected leader who succumbed to injuries from a police lathi charge during an anti-Simon Commission protest in October 1928, reignited their revolutionary zeal. To avenge Rai's death, Bhagat Singh, Azad, and Rajguru assassinated J.P. Saunders, the police officer responsible for the lathi charge in Lahore. The revolutionaries justified their actions by stating that it was their duty to avenge the insult to the nation caused by the murder of such a respected leader.



◆ *Bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly (April 1929)*

To make the public aware of their new objectives and the need for mass revolution, the HSRA leadership decided to stage a dramatic protest. On April 8, 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw a harmless bomb into the Central Legislative Assembly. The purpose was not to cause harm but to protest against the passage of the Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill, which threatened civil liberties, especially those of workers. The revolutionaries wanted to get arrested deliberately, using the trial as a platform to spread their message and ideology.

◆ *Actions against the revolutionaries*

Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru were arrested and tried in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. Many other HSRA members faced trials in various cases. While in jail, these revolutionaries went on hunger strikes to protest the inhumane conditions and demanded to be treated with dignity as political prisoners. One of them, Jatin Das, became a martyr after fasting for 64 days. Bhagat Singh emerged as a national hero during this period. Meanwhile, Azad continued his revolutionary activities, including an attempt to blow up Viceroy Irwin's train in December 1929. Throughout 1930, there were numerous violent incidents in Punjab and the United Provinces, showing the ongoing revolutionary fervour. Azad was eventually killed in a police encounter in Allahabad in February 1931. Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru were hanged on March 23, 1931, becoming martyrs in the struggle for India's independence.

### **The Chittagong Armoury Raid and its Impact**

◆ *Revolutionary Activities in Bengal*

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bengal witnessed a revival of revolutionary activity as a part of the larger nationalist struggle. This resurgence was marked by a strategic shift towards organised armed resistance against British colonial rule, as was demonstrated prominently by Surya Sen and the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930. Following the turbulent aftermath of World War I and the Rowlatt Act, which severely restricted civil liberties in India, revolutionary groups in Bengal, such as the Anushilan and Yugantar, sought to challenge British authority through both political and militant means. These groups functioned discreetly, often merging with mainstream political activities, particularly within the Indian National Congress under leaders like C.R. Das and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Surya Sen, who gathered prominence within the revolutionary circles of Chittagong and was an active participant in the Non-Cooperation Movement, organised a daring plan to

◆ *The Chittagong Armoury Raid*

seize control of the Police and Auxiliary Force armouries in Chittagong on the night of 18<sup>th</sup> April 1930. This bold act was intended to show the possibility of challenging British military forces and to spark resistance across Bengal. Under the leadership of Sen, a group of revolutionaries, including Ganesh Ghosh and Lokenath Baul, captured the Police Armoury and the Auxiliary Force Armoury. They failed to obtain ammunition from the latter. However, they caused disruptions to railway operations and communication lines.

◆ *Proclamation of a revolutionary Government*

After the raid, Surya Sen hoisted the National Flag amidst the slogans of *Bande Mataram* and *Inquilab Zindabad* and announced the establishment of a Provisional Revolutionary Government. He called for a united stand against imperialism. This symbolic gesture was to mobilise the local population towards the cause and launch a wider anti-colonial sentiment.

◆ *British response*  
◆ *Popular support and recruitment*

In response, the British colonial government carried out harsh retaliation by deploying armed forces, imposing draconian laws, and arbitrarily detaining suspected revolutionaries. The British aim was to suppress nationalist fervour and reestablish colonial authority. Even though the raid failed in terms of military, it invoked a fresh wave of revolutionary movement throughout Bengal. Thus, many young Indians joined the cause of armed resistance against British rule.

#### 4.1.3.3 Women's Role in Revolutionary Movements

◆ *Role of women in HSRA*

As we noted, beginning in the 1920s, the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) fostered a revolutionary tradition across Northern India. This movement arose as a response to the Gandhian non-violent approach, which it deemed ineffective for India's liberation. The revolutionaries believed that targeted assassinations of high-ranking British officials would create greater effect since they might overthrow the British government and hasten their withdrawal from India. These revolutionary groups operated in secrecy, leading difficult lives that made it challenging for women to join the movement. The harsh conditions and dangers involved led many male revolutionaries, like Yashpal, to discourage women from joining. However, this didn't stop some women from becoming involved. In Bengal, for instance, women formed revolutionary groups, created physical culture clubs, and secretly read banned revolutionary literature. The Chittagong Armoury Raid on April 19, 1930, was a





particularly significant event that inspired women like Pritilata Wadedar and Kalpana Dutt to become more actively involved in revolutionary activities.

♦ *Women revolutionaries*

Young women played a significant and active role, particularly under the leadership of Surya Sen. These women were not just supporters but key participants in the struggle, providing shelter to revolutionaries, carrying crucial messages, and even taking up arms to fight. Prominent among them was Pritilata Waddedar, who sacrificed her life while leading a raid, reflecting her strong commitment to the cause. Kalpana Dutt, another courageous revolutionary, was arrested and tried alongside Surya Sen, receiving a life sentence for her involvement. Santi Ghosh and Suniti Chandheri, two schoolgirls from Comilla, made a bold statement by assassinating the district magistrate in December 1931. Similarly, Bina Das demonstrated extraordinary bravery when she fired at the Governor of Bengal during her convocation ceremony in February 1932. These women not only challenged British colonial rule but also defied social norms, showcasing their determination and courage in the fight for India's independence.

♦ *Women in left movements*

In addition to the revolutionary movements, the late 1920s saw the rise of a viable Left alternative within the Indian Nationalist Movement. Many women were drawn to the Communist Party due to its radical program, which appealed especially to the youth. The success of the Soviet Union in areas like agriculture through collectivisation and the Five Year Plans also attracted many to communism. One such woman was Hajra Begum from Rampur, belonging to a small princely state in Uttar Pradesh. She was not interested in Gandhi's program and found herself ideologically aligned with communism. Her commitment to the cause was further solidified when she went to England to study and had the opportunity to visit the Soviet Union. In London, she interacted with like-minded students like Sajjad Zaheer, Z.A. Ahmed, and K.M. Ashraf, who all became the first Indian members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). Upon returning to India, she worked within the Indian National Congress (as the Communist Party of India was banned at the time) and emerged as a labour leader, organising railway workers in Allahabad and becoming a popular speaker at student meetings in the 1930s.

Throughout the 1940s, the number of women participating in various Left-wing organisations like the Progressive



◆ *Women's contributions*

Writers' Association and the Indian People's Theatre Association grew significantly. Women such as Rasheed Jahan, Ismat Chughtai, and Rekha Jain made their mark in literature, theatre, and music, using these cultural forms to mobilise workers and peasants across India. This surge in women's participation in the Left movement, combined with their active roles in the Quit India Movement, highlights the diverse ways in which women contributed to India's struggle for independence.

## Summarised Overview

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of labour movements in India, initially driven by economic concerns. However, as the nationalist movement evolved, some leaders began to support Indian workers in British-owned enterprises, which eventually integrated into the larger nationalist struggle. This shift in focus not only legitimised labour struggles but also increased their impact and transformed them into a significant force against colonial exploitation. The trade union movement in colonial India played a critical role in the struggle for independence. It shows the relationship between economic and political liberation and the importance of organised labour in challenging both colonial and capitalist exploitation. After a brief lull, the late 1930s witnessed a revival driven by leftist consolidation and increased civil liberties under Congress provincial governments. World War II further complicated the atmosphere, with the Communist Party's strategic shifts influencing worker's participation. The period from 1945 to 1947 was marked by a powerful resurgence in the Indian trade union movement, with workers actively engaging in political and economic struggles.

Peasant movements in early twentieth-century India show the interconnection between local grievances and the national struggle for independence. These movements were integral components of a larger effort to challenge and dismantle colonial rule. The Kisan Sabha's activities mobilised peasants and integrated their demands into the national struggle for independence. The Eka movement, with its distinct rituals and inclusive leadership, represented a crucial chapter in the history of peasant movements in India. The Mappila rebellion of 1921 points out the nuances of agrarian discontent intertwined with religious and nationalist movements.

The revolutionary movements, such as the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, led by Bhagat Singh, challenged colonial hegemony through militant and ideological action. The decline of revolutionary terrorism paved the way towards Marxist and Gandhian ideologies.



## Assignments

1. Examine the emergence and influence of socialist ideas in India. Analyse the role of major socialist thinkers and movements in shaping Indian political discourse.
2. Analyse the origin, growth and significance of trade unions and peasant movements in India and their role in the Indian National Movement.
3. Detail the formation, objectives, and significant activities of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC).
4. Examine the revolutionary activities led by the HSRA. Assess the impact of HSRA's activities on India's freedom struggle.
5. Explain the contributions of women in revolutionary movements. Choose any specific women revolutionaries and their contributions to the independence movement.

## Suggested Reading

1. Chandra, Bipan. *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1979.
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3. Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India, 1885-1947*. New Delhi: Macmillan India, 1989.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU



## Round Table Conference and After

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner would be able to:

- ◆ understand the objectives and outcomes of the Round Table Conferences
- ◆ analyse the Gandhi-Ambedkar debate on caste and social reforms
- ◆ evaluate the implications of the Government of India Act of 1935

### Background

The Round Table Conferences held in London between 1930 and 1932 were major events in the Indian struggle for independence. These conferences were the stage for intense discussions on constitutional reforms in India, bringing together representatives from various Indian political groups and the British government.

During this period, India was deeply affected by the Great Depression (1929-1939), which caused widespread poverty and unrest among the people. The British government's harsh policies only added fuel to the nationalist sentiments. The Simon Commission, which excluded Indian members, sparked widespread protests, leading to increased demands for greater autonomy, as outlined in the Nehru Report.

This unit covers major political dialogues and developments during the early 1930s. We'll explore the Round Table Conferences, the important debates between Gandhi and Ambedkar, and the legislative changes introduced by the Government of India Act of 1935.

### Keywords

Round Table Conferences, Gandhi-Ambedkar Debate, Government of India Act 1935, Constitutional Reforms, Gandhi- Irwin Pact, Communal Award, Poona Pact





## Discussion

### ◆ Context for Round Table Conference

Before delving into the details of the Round Table Conferences, let us look at the socio-economic and political context in India during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Civil Disobedience movement, which began in 1930, marked the pinnacle of the nationalist sentiment. The Civil Disobedience Movement had a significant rural participation, with peasants being mobilised through Gandhian methods. Sixty thousand people were detained from 1930 to 1931, a period marked with record arrest rates. Thousands of women were convicted, particularly in Bombay, Bengal, and UP.

### ◆ Civil Disobedience Movement ◆ Temporary suspension of the movement

The Civil Disobedience movement forced the British government into negotiations and the first Round Table Conference in London (November 1930 to January 1931). Although initially boycotted by the Congress, pressure from Indian business interests led to the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931. This agreement saw the temporary suspension of the movement and the release of prisoners detained during the agitation. However, the lack of intervention from the side of Gandhi in the case of the execution of young revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru in March 1931 led to a sense of betrayal among the youth.

### ◆ Alternatives to Gandhian strategies

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, radical nationalists and Jawaharlal Nehru began looking at alternatives to Gandhian anti-imperialist strategies. From 1929 onwards, left-wing organisations were ever more active and participated in strikes through the Workers and Peasant Parties (WPPs). Communists gained strength by organising an anti-imperialist movement involving the working class, peasantry, and middle class, both within and outside the Congress.

### ◆ Revolutionary nationalism and women's participation

Following the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, mainstream Indian politics experienced a void. On the other hand, revolutionary nationalism, particularly in Bengal, gained strength. Individual acts of violence against British officials increased, with a notable increase in the involvement of women. For instance, on December 14, 1932, Shanti Ghosh and Suniti Chaudhury assassinated Tippera District Magistrate B. Stevens. As a result, the government implemented repressive measures.

## 4.2.1 Round Table Conferences (RTCs)

### 4.2.1.1. First Round Table Conference (1930-31)

◆ *The First Round Table Conference (1930-31)*

The First Round Table Conference, convened from November 1930 to January 1931, was noteworthy as it was the first time all political parties from India were invited to discuss constitutional reforms. However, the Indian National Congress boycotted the conference. They claimed it was a mere gesture by the British government without any commitment to genuine self-governance. Hence, we can notice that the discussions at this conference lacked the representation of the most influential political force in India.

◆ *Indian participation in the First Round Table Conference*

The First Round Table Conference saw a diverse group of Indian leaders representing various interests. The Indian princely states were represented by leaders such as Maharaja of Alwar, Maharaja of Baroda, Nawab of Bhopal, Maharaja of Bikaner, Rana of Dholpur, Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja of Nawanagar, Maharaja of Patiala, Maharaja of Rewa, Chief Sahib of Sangli, Sir Prabhaskar Pattani, Manubhai Mehta, Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Khan, Akbar Hydari, Mirza Ismail, and Col. Kailas Narain Haksar. The Muslim League's delegation included Aga Khan III, Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Muhammad Shafi, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, A.K. Fazlul Huq, Hafiz Ghulam Hussain Hidayat Ullah, Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, Raja Sher Muhammad Khan of Domeli, and A.H. Ghuznavi. The Hindu Mahasabha and its supporters were represented by B.S. Moonje, M.R. Jayakar, and Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath. At the same time, the Sikhs had Sardar Ujjal Singh and Sardar Sampuran Singh as their representatives. The Parsis included Phiroze Sethna, Cowasji Jehangir, and Homi Mody. Women were represented by Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz and Radhabai Subbarayan. Liberals included J.N. Basu, Tej Bahadur Sapru, C.Y. Chintamani, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, and Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad. The Justice Party sent Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, Bhaskarrao Vithojirao Jadhav, and Sir A.P. Patro. Labour represented N.M. Joshi and B. Shiva Rao. Indian Christians represented K.T. Paul, Anglo-Indians represented Henry Gidney, and Europeans represented Sir Hubert Carr, Sir Oscar de Glanville, T.F. Gavin Jones, and C.E. Wood. The Government of India was represented by Narendra Nath Law, Bhupendra Nath Mitra, C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, and M. Ramachandra Rao.

Despite the broad participation, the conference did not



♦ *Outcome of the Conference*

yield any significant results. While there was agreement on the development of India into a federation, some safeguards for defence and finance, and the transfer of certain departments, little progress was made in implementing these recommendations. The persistence of civil disobedience showed the challenges in reaching a consensus. The British government recognised the importance of the Indian National Congress's involvement in discussions on India's constitutional future.

♦ *The Gandhi-Irwin Pact*

The failure of the First Round Table Conference to achieve substantial progress led to the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in March 1931. This pact was a truce between the Indian National Congress and the British government. It led to the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement. In return, the British government agreed to release political prisoners and conceded to several demands made by the Congress. The Congress, in turn, decided to participate in the Second Round Table Conference.

#### **4.2.1.2. Second Round Table Conference (1931)**

♦ *Gandhi's Participation*

The Second Round Table Conference, held from September to December 1931, witnessed the participation of Mahatma Gandhi as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. Despite Gandhi's efforts to negotiate a substantial degree of self-governance, the conference failed to achieve any notable progress. The British government, influenced by conservative elements led by Winston Churchill, was unwilling to make substantial concessions. The conference ended without any concrete results and led to widespread disappointment in India.

The Second Round Table Conference saw a wide array of Indian representatives from different political and social groups. Various princely states were represented, including Maharajas of Alwar, Baroda, and Bhopal. The Muslim community was represented by figures such as Aga Khan III, Maulana Shaukat Ali, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, A.K. Fazlul Huq, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Shafi, and others. M.R. Jayakar, B.S. Moonje, and Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath represented Hindu groups. The Liberals sent members like J.N. Basu, C.Y. Chintamani, Tej Bahadur Sapru, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, and Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad. The Justice Party was represented by Raja of Bobbili, Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, Sir A.P. Patro, and Bhaskarrao Vithojirao Jadhav. The Depressed Classes were represented by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Rettamalai Srinivasan. Sikhs, Parsis,

◆ *Indian Representation in the Second RTC*

Indian Christians, and Indian women were represented by Sarojini Naidu, Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz, and Radhabai Subbarayan. Universities had their voices heard through Syed Sultan Ahmed and Biseshwar Dayal Seth. Also, representatives from Burma and provinces such as Sindh, Assam, Central Provinces, and the NWFP participated in the Conference. Narendra Nath Law, C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, and M. Ramachandra Rao represented the Government of India at the Conference.

◆ *Factors affected the Conference*

Let us have a look at some factors that influenced the outcome of the Conference. Before the commencement of the Conference, Lord Irwin was replaced by Lord Willingdon as Viceroy of India, and the Labour government in Britain was replaced by a National Government under Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, who led a Conservative-dominated cabinet. The rise in revolutionary activities in India and resistance from Britain's right-wing, led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, complicated negotiations. Gandhi, advocating for equality and a responsible government for India, found many delegates either conservative or loyal to the British government, which undermined his efforts. Disagreements over issues like separate electorates for Muslims, depressed classes, Christians, and Anglo-Indians led to a deadlock.

◆ *Gandhi's return to India*

Despite the diverse representation, the conference did not produce significant outcomes. Ramsay MacDonald proposed the establishment of two Muslim-majority provinces, an Indian Consultative Committee, and expert committees, with the threat of a unilateral British Communal Award if consensus was not reached. The British government's refusal to grant India more freedom led Gandhi to return to India in 1931, marking a continued struggle for India's independence.

◆ *Second Civil Disobedience Movement*

The Congress Working Committee resumed the Civil Disobedience Movement on December 29, 1931, following the failure of the second Round Table Conference. From March to December 1931, Congress led a movement for rent reduction and against summary evictions in the United Provinces. In the NWFP, severe repression was unleashed against Khudai Khidmatgars and peasants agitating against government tax collection. In Bengal, draconian ordinances and mass detentions were used to fight terrorism. In September 1931, a firing incident occurred on political prisoners in Hijli Jail.

The arrest of Gandhi in 1932, rural discontent continued



◆ *Government response*

and led to peasant agitations in regions like Gujarat and Bihar. The Patidar peasants in Gujarat defied the Congress by waging a no-revenue campaign until 1934. In Bihar, particularly when the Congress Socialist Party was founded in 1934, the Kisan Sabhas implemented a radical agricultural program to resolve tenant grievances. The Congress released a report on agrarian hardship in 1931 in response to similar turmoil that occurred in Uttar Pradesh. In NWFP, the Khudai Khidmatgar movement gained momentum in tandem with the Congress, in contrast to the relatively indifferent mill workers during the Civil Disobedience Movement. 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 were banned, activists arrested, properties confiscated, occupied Gandhi ashrams, women were subjected to harsh repression, press gagged, and nationalist literature banned.

◆ *Popular response*

In the first four months, around 80,000 Satyagrahis, mostly urban and rural poor, were jailed. Other protests included picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops, illegal gatherings, non-violent demonstrations, national day celebrations, symbolic hoistings of the flag, non-payment of chowkidari 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. The movement aimed to protest against injustice and oppression. However, this stage of the movement was short-lived because (i) Gandhi and other leaders did not have enough time to pick up the pace, and (ii) the people were unprepared. Gandhi ultimately decided to end the Civil Disobedience Action in April 1934. People had earned freedom in their hearts even though they had been subdued by a stronger force; they still had political faith in the Congress.

◆ *The Third Round Table Conference (1932)*

#### 4.2.1.3 Third Round Table Conference (1932)

The Third Round Table Conference, held from November to December 1932, was again marked by the absence of the Indian National Congress. The Conference was attended primarily by loyalists and representatives of princely states. Hence, it was ineffective in addressing the demands of the common population of India. The discussions at this Conference revolved around the details of constitutional reforms but failed to make any breakthroughs.

The Indian States were represented by various deputies,



◆ *Representatives in Third RTC*

including Akbar Hydari, Mirza Ismail, V.T. Krishnamachari, Wajahat Hussain, Sir Sukhdeo Prasad, J.A. Surve, Raja Oudh Narain Bisarya, Manubhai Mehta, Nawab Liaquat Hayat Khan, Fateh Naseeb Khan, L.F. Rushbrook Williams, and Raja of Sarila. Other notable Indian representatives included Aga Khan III, B.R. Ambedkar, Ramakrishna Ranga Rao, Sir Hubert Carr, Nanak Chand Pandit, A.H. Ghuznavi, Henry Gidney, Hafiz Hidayat Hussain, Muhammad Iqbal, M.R. Jayakar, Cowasji Jehangir, N.M. Joshi, Narasimha Chintaman Kelkar, Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar, Begum Jahanara Shahnawaz, A.P. Patro, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr. Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, Sir Shadi Lal, Tara Singh Malhotra, Sir Nripendra Nath Sircar, and Muhammad Zafarullah Khan.

◆ *Enactment of the Government of India Act 1935*

The outcomes of the two earlier Round Table Conferences were compiled and published in a White Paper in 1933. This document outlined the proposed constitutional reforms for India and was subsequently debated in the British Parliament. To thoroughly analyse these recommendations, a Joint Select Committee was established. The Committee formulated the Government of India Act of 1935 in July of that year. This Act introduced significant changes to the governance of India, laying the foundation for greater self-rule, although it fell short of granting full independence.

◆ *Impact*

Historians have debated the importance and impact of the Round Table Conferences on the Indian independence movement. While some view them as a significant step towards constitutional reforms, others argue that they were mere delaying tactics used by the British government. Bipan Chandra, in his analysis, emphasises that the conferences exposed the limitations of British willingness to accommodate Indian aspirations. Judith Brown, on the other hand, underlines the strategic importance of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact as a temporary truce that allowed the Congress to regroup and strategise for future struggles. Critics of the Round Table Conferences argue that they failed to represent the genuine aspirations of the Indian people. The exclusion of key political groups and the dominance of conservative elements within the British government rendered the conferences ineffective. The lack of substantial progress led to further disillusionment and reinforced the necessity of a more radical approach towards achieving independence.

#### **4.2.2. 'Divide and Rule' and the Communal Award**

The British policy of 'Divide and Rule' found a new



◆ *Institutionalisation of Communal division*

expression in the Communal Award announced in August 1932. This policy aimed to create divisions within Indian society by recognising separate electorates for various communities, thereby deepening communal lines and preventing the emergence of a unified national identity. The Communal Award allotted seats in legislatures to various minorities based on separate electorates. Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians, already treated as minorities, were joined by the Depressed Classes (Scheduled Castes) under this new set-up. This arrangement reinforced communal identities and aimed to create political divisions within Indian society. Each community could only vote for its representatives, thus institutionalising communal divisions.

◆ *Congress' opposition to the Communal Award*

The Indian National Congress opposed the idea of separate electorates. They argued that it would perpetuate communal divisions and affect the development of a unified national consciousness. The Congress had previously accepted separate electorates for Muslims as a compromise with the Muslim League in 1916, but it opposed extending this principle to other communities, particularly the Depressed Classes. The Congress's stance was that any change to the Communal Award should not occur without the consent of the affected minorities.

◆ *Gandhi's reaction and the fast to death*

Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned in Yerwada jail at the time. Gandhi staunchly opposed the inclusion of the Depressed Classes as a separate electorate. He claimed that this move would be detrimental to both Hinduism and the Depressed Classes. He argued that it would reinforce untouchability and obstruct social reform efforts. Gandhi believed that separate electorates for the Depressed Classes would only deepen their marginalised status rather than eradicate untouchability. He insisted that the Depressed Classes should be elected by a general electorate under a common franchise. He did not object to their reservation of additional seats. To get his demand met, he began a fast unto death on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1932. This act of self-sacrifice was intended to awaken Indian society and bring to the forefront the issue of untouchability and sectarian divisions.

Gandhi's fasting brought a deep concern and emotional response all over India. Mass gatherings, fasting, and prayers were held nationwide. The Depressed classes entered several temples and public areas. Influential political leaders such as Madan Mohan Malaviya, M.C. Rajah, and B.R. Ambedkar participated in intensive talks to resolve the situation. The outcome of such discussions was an agreement signed on

◆ *Poona Pact*

24<sup>th</sup> September 1932 called the Poona Pact. Under the Pact, the idea of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes was dropped. Rather, the number of reserved seats for the Depressed Classes in provincial legislatures was increased from 71 to 147, and they were allocated 18 percent of the seats in the Central Legislature. Bipan Chandra argues that such a compromise guaranteed political representation for the Depressed Classes while maintaining a unified electorate.

### 4.2.3 Gandhi's Campaign against Untouchability and the Poona Pact

◆ *Communal mobilisation and Gandhi's Campaigns*

The period witnessed growing communal mobilisation and escalating tensions between Hindus and Muslims. The Kanpur Riot of 1931 is evidence of it. During this time, Mahatma Gandhi's disagreements with Bhim Rao Ambedkar on the Communal Award became apparent. During 1933-34, Gandhi observed fasts, campaigned against untouchability, and formed the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The British government's support for anti-reform groups and the failure of the Temple Entry Bill in August 1934 demonstrated the imperial strategy to weaken the national movement.

◆ *Gandhi's commitment to the Harijans*

After the Poona Pact, Gandhi promised the Harijans (Depressed Classes) that he would ensure the fulfilment of the terms of the Pact. He gave an assurance to the Harijans after breaking his fast: "I would like to assure my Harijan friends... that they may hold my life as a hostage for its due fulfilment." According to Bipan Chandra, as promised, Gandhi put aside all other concerns and focused on leading a fierce campaign against untouchability for around two years.

◆ *The Harijan tour and campaign*

After his release from prison, Gandhi engaged in a nationwide Harijan tour until July 1934. The tour began from the Satyagraha Ashram in Wardha on 7 November 1933. By all means, he covered more than 20,000 kilometres to raise funds for the recently formed Harijan Sewak Sangh and spread the word about the eradication of untouchability. His goal was to organise social workers for the social, political, economic, and cultural upliftment of the Harijan people.

◆ *Major fasts and public response*

Gandhi observed two important fastings on May 8, 1933 and August 16, 1933, in order to highlight the gravity of untouchability. These fasts were intended to motivate his supporters and prioritise how urgent the cause was. Gandhi stood firmly in the face of opposition from various sides, including his wife Kasturba. Public outcry over his fasts



and the larger campaign resulted in mass meetings and the opening of public facilities to Harijans across the country.

◆ *Opposition and challenges*

The conventional orthodox and reactionary factions within Hindu society fiercely opposed the campaign led by Gandhi. On June 25, 1934, in Poona, he faced black flag demonstrations, disturbances during his meetings, and even an attempted assassination. Despite these obstructions, Gandhi was persistent in pointing out the humanistic and moral grounds for the eradication of untouchability.

◆ *Issues addressed in Gandhi's Campaign*

The critical issues addressed in Gandhi's Campaign were as follows. Gandhi highlighted how Harijans were unfairly excluded from social services and public facilities, criticising the harsh treatment they faced in Hindu society. Gandhi supported the opening of temples to Harijans as a symbol of the complete abolition of untouchability. He made a distinction between the caste system and the untouchability, stating that the former could be reformed while the latter ought to be eliminated. He questioned even religious scriptures if they were against human dignity and reason. Gandhi warned that Hinduism itself was at stake and stressed the necessity for caste Hindus to atone for past wrongs against Harijans.

#### 4.2.4 Gandhi-Ambedkar Debate

◆ *Gandhi's Caste Strategy*

The debate between Gandhi and Ambedkar centred on their varied views regarding the caste system and untouchability in India. Gandhi and Ambedkar both opposed the caste system and sought to uplift the Scheduled Castes. Gandhi aimed to eliminate the entire caste system, believing that Hinduism needed to become casteless for it to survive. He argued that political upliftment alone wouldn't end caste discrimination and worked towards social reform from within Hinduism. Gandhi opposed separate electorates for untouchables, seeing them as a means of perpetuating their marginalisation. His strategy focused on tackling untouchability, which he viewed as the weakest link in the caste system, to undermine the entire structure. Gandhi envisioned a classless and casteless society, promoting inter-caste marriages to reduce caste divisions. Gandhi viewed the Varna system as a potentially harmonious social structure if free from untouchability. In contrast, Ambedkar argued that untouchability was a by-product of the caste system and that the system itself needed to be dismantled for the genuine emancipation of outcastes. He maintained that the persistence of castes would perpetuate untouchability and

its associated issues, necessitating a complete overhaul of the caste system.

◆ *Ambedkar's empowerment approach*

In contrast, Dr. Ambedkar also opposed the caste system and Brahminism, but his approach differed. Ambedkar advocated for changing religions to escape the caste-ridden Hindu system, ultimately embracing Buddhism. His strategy focused on empowering the Scheduled Castes through education and political mobilisation. Ambedkar encouraged the Scheduled Castes to confront caste Hindus directly and sought to improve their conditions through their own efforts.

◆ *Gandhi's focus on unity*

Gandhi's approach emphasised cooperation between Harijans and caste Hindus, arguing that internal caste issues should not divide the people in their struggle for independence. He believed that unity among all Indians was crucial for the anti-imperialist struggle and that hostility towards caste Hindus would harm the Harijans, who were a minority. Gandhi focused on preparing Harijans for long-term struggles through constructive work and integration into mainstream society.

◆ *Social transformation*

Lastly, Gandhi believed that the upliftment and welfare of the Harijans were intrinsically linked to the overall development of Indian society. He rejected the idea of separate electorates for Harijans, fearing it would fracture Indian society. Instead of advocating for separation, Gandhi aimed to transform Hindu society to ensure a more inclusive and unified nation.

◆ *Context*

#### 4.2.5 The Government of India Act 1935

The Government of India Act 1935 was an important piece of legislation passed at a critical point in the history of British India. The Act was the culmination of several years of political negotiations, deliberations, and demands for greater self-governance from Indian leaders. The end of the First World War and the ensuing surge in nationalist sentiment in India provide the historical context for this Act.

◆ *Widespread unrest*

Many Indian leaders considered the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, which introduced a monarchical system of government, as inadequate. Under this system, the subjects of government were divided into two categories – the British controlled the more important sectors, such as finance and law and order. At the same time, Indians managed less important sectors such as agriculture and education. The dissatisfaction with these reforms, coupled with the harsh





repressive measures of the British in response to growing nationalist activities, led to widespread unrest and the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in the early 1920s.

◆ *Precursors to the Act*

In 1927, the Simon Commission was appointed to review the functioning of dyarchy in India. The Commission encountered staunch opposition as it did not include any Indian members. The Nehru Report of 1928, an all-parties conference report, which came later demanded dominion status for India. This reflected the growing urge for full self-governance. Moreover, the Civil Disobedience Movement in the early 1930s and the subsequent Round Table Conferences, where Indian leaders and British officials discussed constitutional reforms, were major precursors to the Government of India Act 1935.

#### 4.2.5.1 Provisions and Features of the Act

◆ *All India Federation*

The Government of India Act 1935 was the longest piece of legislation enacted by the British Parliament at the time. It sought to address some of the demands for greater self-governance and also ensured continued British control over critical areas of administration. The Act proposed the establishment of an All-India Federation, which was to be based on the union of British Indian provinces and princely states. The Act aimed to establish central responsibility within a strong federation, with defence and political relations remaining under British control. The Act's provisions included imperial safeguards over finance, civil services, commerce, minorities, and the stability of British India.

◆ *Federation and Princely States*

The 1935 Government of India Act proposed a federation, which was dependent on the agreement of Indian princely states. These states, with significant representation in both houses of the legislature (Lower and Upper House), could negotiate their terms of entry, maintaining their feudal control and exemption from voting requirements. The Act did not compel princely states to reform, leaving 81 million subjects without representation. This feudal despotism persisted despite Congress's growing interest in more responsible governance in these states, influenced by the Praja Mandal movements advocating for state-subject rights.

One of the major aspects of the Act was the introduction of provincial autonomy. It is also known as the Provincial Autonomy Act. A major departure from the dyarchical

◆ *Provincial  
Autonomy*

structure occurred when all the provincial departments came under the control of the elected ministers. Because of their greater autonomy, provincial governments were more capable of making decisions and implementing policies in various fields such as agriculture, health, and education. However, the governors appointed by the British had substantial authority. They had the power to veto legislative measures and, if necessary, assume control of the provincial administration. Particularly concerning law and order, minorities, rights of civil servants, and British business interests, these powers guaranteed the British the right to intervene whenever they found it necessary.

◆ *Bicameral  
legislature*

A bicameral legislature at the centre, comprising the Federal Assembly and the Council of State, was also introduced by the Act. However, crucial areas like defence, foreign affairs, and communications continued to be under the control of the British Viceroy. The Viceroy also possessed special powers to act by decree and suspend the constitution in times of emergency. This ensured that ultimate control was vested in the British government.

◆ *Limited franchise  
and Communal  
representation*

The franchise under the Act was restricted, with only about one-sixth of the adults entitled to vote- i.e., limited the electorate to just 150,000 out of 365 million people, divided along communal lines. This limited franchise was intended to keep political power in the hands of a small group of people who were more inclined to support British interests than the larger Indian population. Separate elections were held for Muslims, Sikhs, Scheduled Castes, Christians, and others, reflecting Britain's 'divide and rule' policy. Gandhi's opposition to separate electorates through the Civil Disobedience Movement was ignored by the Act's framers.

◆ *British strategy*

The Government of India Act 1935 was part of a larger British strategy to suppress Indian nationalism. The British aimed to weaken the Indian freedom movement by dividing the Congress and integrating its members and other moderate nationalists into the colonial system, using a combination of forceful suppression followed by constitutional reforms. The idea was that the British would appease these factions and deter the emergence of more radical segments by granting limited self-governance. It was a strategy devised to make a split among the members of the Congress, thereby hindering its ability to organise a cohesive mass movement against colonial authority.



◆ *Formation of Congress Ministries*

The Act was also intended to restore the political position of moderates who had fallen out of favour during the Civil Disobedience Movement, thereby creating a loyalist faction within the Indian political scenario. Despite the limited powers granted by the Act, the Indian National Congress decided to participate in the provincial elections conducted by the terms of the Act. Taking advantage of the opportunity to implement various constructive programs, in 1937, the Congress formed ministries in several provinces. These included measures for the upliftment of villages, promotion of khadi (hand-spun cloth), educational reforms, and efforts to reduce the economic burdens that peasants faced from debt, taxes, and rent. This involvement was viewed as a means to showcase the commitment of the Congress to improve the lives of common Indians and expand the base of support for the nationalist movement.

◆ *Criticisms*

However, as the Viceroy of India, Linlithgow, put it, the main aim of the Government of India Act 1935 was to retain British power in India. The Act's provisions ensured that the core elements of colonial rule persisted even though some administrative functions were transferred. This dual approach of offering limited reforms while maintaining vital control reflected the British intention to regulate rather than address the escalating demand for Indian independence. The provisions of the Government of India Act 1935 were criticised by various quarters. Many Indian nationalists considered it a half-hearted measure that fell far short of their demands for complete self-governance or dominion status. Rather than moving towards self-government, the limited franchise and the extensive powers held by the Viceroy and the governors appointed by the British were perceived as means of maintaining British control.

◆ *Limitations*

Moreover, the Act's provisions for the princely states were controversial. The princely states were wary of losing their autonomy, so they were hesitant to join the proposed federation. The failure of the federation to materialise brought attention to how difficult it would be to bring the diverse political units within India under a single administrative structure. Furthermore, the Act did not comprehensively address the economic and social grievances of the Indian population. Although several reforms were made possible through provincial autonomy, the overall economic policies continued to be largely influenced by British interests. Due to this limitation, the general issues of poverty, land tenure, and industrial development remained unresolved, which fuelled

ongoing discontent and unrest.

◆ *Disunity*

Despite being welcomed by the British authorities, the 1935 Act and the subsequent formation of ministries after the 1937 elections led to increased disunity. The Congress's demand for immediate Swaraj (self-rule) and later complete independence (Poorna Swaraj) clashed with the visions of the princely states and the Muslim minority, who sought assurances from the imperial authority against complete Indian control. By taking advantage of this disunity, the British government delayed India's transition to self-governance. This period laid the groundwork for the Quit India Movement.

◆ *Financial constraints*

◆ *1937 elections*

The financial provisions of the 1935 Act heavily favoured the central government. Over 80% of the federal budget was non-votable, and 90% of federal revenue came from British provinces, with only 10% from princely states. This financial structure burdened provincial resources, responsible for public services, and stunted economic growth, perpetuating illiteracy, disease, and poverty. Despite these issues, the Muslim League and Congress participated in the 1937 elections, which resulted in the formation of Provincial Ministries. With this, the focus shifted from resolving peasant grievances to engaging in electoral politics.

### Timeline

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1919 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms</li> <li>• Gandhi's movement against the Rowlatt Act</li> <li>• Jallianwala Bagh massacre</li> </ul>                               |
| 1920 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gandhi assumes the Indian National Congress leadership</li> </ul>                                                                                             |
| 1921 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements</li> </ul>                                                                                                             |
| 1922 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal of Non-cooperation movement after Chauri Chaura incident</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| 1923 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry of Swaraj Party candidates into the legislative councils</li> </ul>                                                                                     |
| 1928 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simon Commission's visit (Indian Statutory)</li> <li>• Report of Motilal Nehru on the future Indian constitution</li> <li>• All Parties Conference</li> </ul> |
| 1929 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lahore Congress</li> <li>• The resolution to attain Purna Swaraj</li> </ul>                                                                                   |
| 1930 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Disobedience Movement</li> <li>• First Round Table Conference in London</li> </ul>                                                                      |



|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1931 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gandhi-Irwin Pact</li> <li>• Withdrawal of Civil Disobedience Movement</li> <li>• Second Round Table Conference</li> </ul>                                                             |
| 1932 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Banning of the Congress</li> <li>• Second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement</li> <li>• The Communal Award and the Poona Pact</li> <li>• Third Round Table Conference</li> </ul> |
| 1934 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Disobedience Movement called off</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      |
| 1935 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of India Act</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1937 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of provincial autonomy</li> <li>• Elections under the new act</li> <li>• Formation of Congress ministries in eight provinces</li> </ul>                                   |
| 1939 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning of World War II</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                   |
| 1940 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lord Linlithgow's August offer of dominion status</li> <li>• Adoption of Lahore Resolution by Muslim League</li> </ul>                                                                 |

Credit: Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *The Plassey to Partition*

## Summarised Overview

The Round Table Conferences, despite their lack of immediate success, were crucial in the course of the Indian independence movement. It underscores the negotiations with the British. The British policy of 'Divide and Rule,' by the Communal Award, aimed to create divisions within Indian society. However, strong opposition from Indian leaders and the subsequent Poona Pact demonstrated the resilience and unity of the nationalist movement. Gandhi's relentless campaign against untouchability following the Poona Pact shows his dedication to social justice and equality. Gandhi emphasised that the eradication of untouchability was important for the integrity of Hinduism and India.

Between 1935 and 1937, the Indian National Movement witnessed a strategic debate with varying viewpoints. Gandhi promoted constructive work and self-sufficiency in villages, while the Swarajists advocated for constitutional methods and legislative participation. Nehru and the Left pushed for a continuous struggle against imperialism, emphasising class struggle and socialist ideals. Despite these differences, a pragmatic approach led by Gandhi and a commitment to national unity ensured that the Congress remained cohesive in its fight against British colonial rule.

The internal Congress debate over office acceptance after the 1935 Act highlighted strategic and ideological tensions. The British aimed to weaken the Congress by promoting divisions and integrating sections into the colonial



framework. Despite differing views, Congress leaders balanced the need for mass struggle with tactical engagement in constitutional politics. At its Lucknow and Faizpur sessions in 1936, the Congress decided to contest elections but deferred the decision on office acceptance. Both the Left and Right wings of the Congress recognised the potential damage a split would cause to the anti-imperialist struggle, maintaining unity despite their differences.

The Government of India Act 1935 introduced provincial autonomy and a bicameral federal legislature, addressing demands for greater self-governance. However, its limited franchise and retention of significant powers by British authorities fell short of nationalist demands. The 1935 Act failed to empower Indians politically and economically, entrenching communal divisions and financial dependency on the central government. Despite its limitations, the Act shaped India's political atmosphere, with Congress's participation in the 1937 elections and subsequent provincial ministries setting the stage for independence in 1947.

## Assignments

1. Discuss the impact of the Round Table Conferences on the Indian Independence movement.
2. Explain how the Communal Award and the Poona Pact influenced the nationalist movement and Gandhi's campaign against untouchability.
3. Discuss Gandhi's anti-untouchability movement in India. Mention the key points of the Gandhi-Ambedkar debate.
4. Evaluate the significance of the Government of India Act 1935 in the constitutional development of British India. Discuss its key provisions and how they addressed or failed to address the demands of Indian nationalists.
5. Analyse the strategic responses of the Indian National Congress to the Act of 1935 and the internal debates within the congress regarding office acceptance and election strategies.



## Suggested Reading

1.

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1. Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar. *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*. Orient Blackswan, 2004.
2. Chandra, Bipan. et al. *India's Struggle for Independence*. Penguin Books, 1988.
3. Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India, 1885-1947*. New Delhi: Macmillan India, 1989.

### Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU





## Towards Independence

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner would be able to:

- ◆ analyse the impact of World War II on the Indian National Movement
- ◆ understand the causes, events, and outcomes of the Quit India Movement
- ◆ evaluate the role of Subhas Chandra Bose and the INA in the struggle for independence
- ◆ discuss the significance of the RIN Mutiny
- ◆ examine the communal politics leading to the Partition of India

### Background

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 was a turning point in the history of India's freedom struggle. Britain secured support for their war efforts by assuring Indians independence after the war. But this promise came with strings attached. Winston Churchill, who became Britain's Prime Minister in 1940, was determined to keep the British Empire intact by all means. He emphasised that winning the war wasn't just about defeating enemies—it was also about securing the British Empire's dominance. For Indian leaders, this was a tricky situation as they had to negotiate both national and international pressures. This tension led to the Quit India Movement in 1942, an intense phase of the struggle for Independence.

### Keywords

World War II, Quit India Movement, Subhas Chandra Bose, INA, RIN Mutiny, Communal Politics, Partition



## Discussion

### 4.3.1 National Movement and the Second World War

#### ♦ *Indian involvement*

In September 1939, when World War II between the Allies (i.e., England, France, and America) and the Axis Powers (headed by Germany) began, Viceroy Linlithgow stated that India, being a part of the British Empire, would also be at war with Germany. However, this autocratic decision without consulting Indian leaders raised doubts about the commitment to its political promises to India. Despite the political impasse with Indian nationalists, the British authorities, particularly Viceroy Linlithgow and the new Secretary of State for India, Leopold Amery, sought to increase India's contribution to the war effort.

#### ♦ *Decline of British trade*

Until the 1930s, India's major role in trade and investment helped the British in their policy decisions. However, by 1939, the economic benefit had diminished. India's exports to Britain were mostly steady, while its imports from Britain fell from £83.5 million in 1917 to £35 million in 1938. The Lancashire lobby lost its cotton trade. Increased 'Indianisation' made civil service posts less appealing to British youngsters. Nevertheless, the Indian Army was crucial for British defence.

#### ♦ *India's contribution to the War*

The resources from the colonies, particularly from India, were mostly used in World War II. By 1945, India had supplied 2.5 million soldiers to the British Indian Army, the Royal Indian Air Force with 28,538 troops, the Royal Indian Navy with 30,000, and the Women's Auxiliary Corps with 10,000 women. Unemployment was the driving force behind this high recruitment. Meanwhile, India has also developed into an important centre for the production of food grains, jute and other materials needed for military supplies. Furthermore, following Japan's entry into the war in 1941, Eastern India became a strategic base for the Allies.

The British Indian government had to carefully balance strategic and economic requirements with the political stances of the Congress and the Muslim League. Wartime support for Britain was conditional on the promises of Indian independence after the war. Initially, political parties debated whether to support the war, but most did not actively oppose it, except for the Forward Bloc founded





◆ *Political responses*

by Subhas Chandra Bose. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were influenced by their principles of democratic liberalism and contempt for Nazi racism. Meanwhile, Britain focused only on winning the war and failed to take advantage of the qualified support from Indian leaders. As a result, the Indian leadership was limited to merely just observers of the world conflict.

◆ *Failure of Congress-Muslim League talks*

The talks between the Congress and the Muslim League, which took place from October 16 -18, 1939, failed due to fundamental disagreements. The main point of difference stemmed from Jinnah's unwillingness to challenge the British administration during the war, in contrast to Nehru's strong anti-imperialist stance. In July 1939, as war loomed, the Congress declared it would not support Britain in an 'imperialist' war. Gandhi suggested supporting the British unconditionally and non-violently. However, the Congress resolved on 14 September 1939 that the Indian people should make decisions about war and peace, not imposed by an external authority. The Congress demanded the British promise democracy and self-determination for India and to be clear about their wartime intentions.

◆ *Offer of Dominion status*

In response, on October 18, 1939, the British government offered Dominion Status after the war. However, they did not mention their political goals or war intentions. Viceroy Linlithgow assured minorities that their interests would be taken into consideration and stated that the British were willing to confer with various Indian representatives on post-war constitutional reforms. The Muslim League's stance was reinforced by this reaction, but the Congress was not satisfied. The Muslim League, by positioning them as a group that represents Muslims, gave Jinnah the authority to guarantee Britain Muslim support during the war.

◆ *Rejection of Congress*

Some scholars argue that the British promoted the prestige of Jinnah for war purposes while subordinating this objective at the provincial level to maintain efficient war operations. Although Linlithgow acknowledged the Congress's 'nuisance value,' the administration still wanted its assistance. The Muslim League pledged war support if recognised as the sole entity representing Indian Muslims, reflecting British colonialist perceptions of India's composition of various nationalities. However, the Congress Working Committee rejected the offer of Dominion Status, seeing it as a continuation of imperialist policies, and demanded the resignation of Congress provincial ministries.

## Resignation of Congress Ministries

### ◆ *Withdrawal of ministries*

In December 1939, the Congress withdrew its ministries from the seven provinces where it had a majority. Considering the substantial reforms these ministries had carried out under the 1935 Act—such as the agrarian and educational reforms in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh—making this decision was challenging. They had pushed toward the release of political prisoners, including those associated with the Kakori Conspiracy Case of 1925. The resignation marked a withdrawal of support for the British government, despite the concerns of certain nationalist leaders that Congress ministries were turning counter-revolutionary.

### ◆ *Continued participation in local politics*

For the next two years, local Congress members continued to participate in local board elections. Judith Brown argues that this involvement showed support for the political system on an individual level. Meanwhile, using special powers under Section 93 of the Government of India Act of 1935, Governors oversaw the provincial administration that was previously controlled by the Congress. Ministries that were not affiliated with Congress remained in working with the British administration. The All-India Congress Committee (AICC) declared itself an anti-war stance and asked its members only to join war committees on an individual basis.

### ◆ *Opposition and support during the War*

The Forward Bloc, formed by Subhas Chandra Bose and his brother Sarat Chandra Bose, remained anti-British and anti-imperialist throughout the war period. The Communist Party was also against imperialist attitudes and opposed them until 1941, when the USSR sided with the Allies in the war. Before offering unconditional support to Britain, the All-India Muslim League sought a complete agreement between its leader, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Viceroy Linlithgow. Jinnah declared 22 December 1939 as the 'Day of Deliverance', the day of Congress's resignation and demanded an investigation into Muslim complaints against Congress rule. After resigning, at its Ramgarh session in March 1940, the Congress demanded a new constitution and independence. In a powerful statement, they condemned Britain's imperialist war objectives and announced a new campaign of non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

## August Offer

With India serving as a key hub, Linlithgow formulated a plan to pool resources and production within the British Empire in response to the war and political tensions. To



◆ *The August Offer*

maintain political stability, he sought emergency powers to suppress any political dissent and made administrative concessions to prevent conflict. The 'August Offer' of August 1940 aimed to grant India Dominion Status and promised to establish a representative body to draft a new constitution after the war. Nevertheless, both the Congress and the Muslim League rejected the idea and the League began to seek a separate state of Pakistan. The August Offer suggested India should be given Dominion Status, which meant a form of self-government within the British Empire. It included plans to expand the Viceroy's executive council to include more Indians, set up a Constituent Assembly to draft a new constitution after the war, ensure the government would address issues related to defence, minority rights, agreements with princely states, and all-India services. The offer also stated that no new constitution could be adopted without the consent of minority groups.

◆ *Provisions of August Offer*

A major threat to British authority came from Subhas Chandra Bose's anti-war stance and subsequent actions, such as his formation of the Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) when he escaped house detention and fled to Berlin. Many Indians had been inspired by his actions, and underscored the growing discontent and desire for independence.

### Individual Satyagraha

◆ *Subhas Chandra Bose and Azad Hind Fauj*

When the British Government disregarded the Congress's resolution offering support to Britain in its war efforts in exchange for the establishment of a provisional national government in India, the Individual Satyagraha, or passive resistance campaign, was launched. In general, Mahatma Gandhi was against India's involvement in the war. This attitude divided Congress into two factions: those who were willing to support the war efforts but reluctant to compromise on full independence and a national government, and Gandhi, who was willing to compromise on the national government issue but opposed India's participation in the war.

◆ *Beginning of Individual Satyagraha*

Towards the end of 1940, the Congress asked Gandhi to lead the movement again. Gandhi prepared for a mass struggle with a strategy of limited satyagraha, starting with a few selected individuals in each locality. This non-violent protest, which ran from October 1940 to December 1942, aimed to challenge the prohibition on protesting against the war rather than opposing India's participation in it. The movement focused on asserting freedom of expression. The

♦ *Nature and objectives*

Satyagrahi would inform the district magistrate in advance about the time and place of their anti-war speech. The carefully chosen Satyagrahis, with Vinoba Bhave as the first on 17 October 1940 and Jawaharlal Nehru as the second, were often surrounded by large crowds when they spoke. The authorities could usually arrest them only after they had delivered their speeches. If the government did not arrest a Satyagrahi, they would continue their protest, moving into villages and beginning a march towards Delhi, which became known as the 'Delhi Chalo' (Onwards to Delhi) movement. Gandhi restricted participation to Congress members who met specific conditions, thus keeping the movement controlled and within the Congress framework.

♦ *Regional variations and arrests*

The campaign witnessed regional variations. Congress Committees in the United Provinces were converted into Satyagraha Committees, and those who disagreed were directed to resign. One of the first detainees from this area was Sucheta Kripalani. Leaders like Vinoba Bhave were arrested in October 1940 in western India, and by June 1941, there were roughly 20,000 Congressmen imprisoned nationwide.

♦ *Impact*

However, the campaign did not gain widespread support among the general public. Gandhi's restrictions on the campaign, combined with previous efforts by provincial Congress governments to address local issues through modest land reforms, reduced its impact. By October 1941, the movement had lost momentum, with only about 5,600 Satyagrahis remaining in jail. Overall, the campaign largely amounted to symbolic acts of defiance and did not significantly threaten the war effort or bring the British government and the Congress to the negotiating table.

♦ *Grassroot participation*

According to recent research, several marginalised groups joined the campaign to voice their opposition to local issues despite the campaign's minimal impact. For example, tribal leader Laxman Naiko and seven local people in Malkangiri district, Orissa, started separate satyagrahas over complaints such as forced labour and illegal exactions. However, their emphasis on discipline and non-violence led officials to dismiss it as ineffective, as they had anticipated more militant actions.

As the campaign progressed, food scarcity, price rises, and state repression intensified popular discontent. The Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party, the



♦ *Political responses*

Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc, and other political organisations increased their criticism of the war effort. Furthermore, right-wing groups, such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the semi-militarised Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), became increasingly active.

### 4.3.2 Quit India Movement (1942)

♦ *Opening to Quit India Movement*

The Quit India Movement of 1942, or the August Revolution, was a major turning point in India's quest for independence. It stood out as the most significant anti-imperialist struggle before the Partition and independence of the country. It also occurred amidst a backdrop of crucial national and international upheaval. By 1942, India was steeped in rising popular nationalism and widespread dissatisfaction due to the failure of previous movements. Moreover, the ongoing war effort had intensified nationalist sentiments. The Individual Satyagraha campaigns highlighted the growing unrest among the Indian population. The situation was aggravated by the suffering and death caused by the Bengal Famine of 1943 and the threat of Japanese advances in Southeast Asia, i.e., the fall of major territories to Japan in Burma and Malaya escalated fears. Concurrently, Subhas Chandra Bose's Azad Hind Fauj (Indian National Army) inspired hopes for military support for Indian independence. Furthermore, the rising tensions between religious communities further fragmented and, hence, intensified the political climate.

♦ *Nature of the Movement*

The Quit India Movement was distinct from previous Congress-led campaigns. Unlike the Individual Satyagraha of 1941, which was more controlled and restrained, the Quit India Movement was characterised by a mass uprising aimed at the complete withdrawal of British power. The movement marked a departure from Gandhi's earlier emphasis on peaceful resistance. It embraced a more aggressive stance, including the potential of armed resistance that could be justified against state violence. The movement was open to all Indians who supported complete independence, not just satyagrahis. Students were particularly encouraged to lead the movement in the context of arrests of senior Congress leaders. The movement sought to undermine British authority in all aspects by completely challenging the colonial administration.

Nationalist historiography identifies the Quit India Movement as the 'third great wave' of struggle against British rule, a major shift from earlier peaceful campaigns. It was seen as a broad-based, mass uprising aiming for the complete



◆ *Nationalist historiography*

withdrawal of British power. Nationalist historians argue that the movement while involving elements of spontaneity, was part of a larger, coordinated effort by the Congress to mobilise mass resistance. Historians like Francis Hutchins describe it as a radical departure from Gandhian norms due to its acceptance of violence and radical methods. In contrast, others point out its role as a vital expression of nationalist unity. Hutchins described it as an 'unfinished revolution.'

◆ *Colonial Narrative*

Meanwhile, the official British narrative interpreted the movement as a subversive plot and focused on the degree of violence and spontaneous actions that challenged state authority. They alleged that the Congress planned a revolutionary agenda to disrupt British rule, citing intelligence reports and the alleged Deoli Plan of Jai Prakash Narayan. These reports framed the movement as a planned conspiracy rather than a spontaneous uprising.

◆ *Regional variations*

Recent studies have analysed how the Quit India Movement unleashed differently across various regions. For instance, Paul Greenough's work on underground literature in Bengal suggests that the movement had a distinctive character due to its deviation from Gandhi's articulated norms. Gyanendra Pandey argues that popular anger and action during the movement should be seen not merely as deviations but as appropriations of Gandhian nationalism for political agendas.

#### **4.3.2.1 Impact of World War II on the Quit India Movement**

◆ *World War II*

As we discussed earlier, the Quit India Movement of 1942 was greatly influenced by the global context of World War II and the resulting national conditions in India. The British government, which prioritised their defence, was reluctant to provide political concessions to India. The military maintained control and gave prime importance in securing strategic positions, which included the defence of British colonies in Asia. The pressing need for India's support of the war effort was heightened due to the immediate threat posed by the Japanese forces, especially in the light of their victory in Burma. As a result, the British adopted a harsh policy against any opposition that could jeopardise the war supplies.

The war worsened inflation and economic hardships. The British government's war policies, such as withholding essential resources to block Japanese access and the



◆ *Economic strain*

evacuation of vital infrastructure, led to severe shortages and economic disruption. For instance, in Bengal, the local population was greatly affected by the denial of basic goods to stop Japanese incursion. It eventually led to widespread turmoil and discontent.

◆ *Spreading fear and misinformation*

Rumours played a major role in influencing popular sentiment and resistance against the British. These rumours – concerning shortages of essential goods, British policies, or potential Japanese advances – intensified existing fears and sparked unrest. In the Central Provinces, for example, stories circulated about strange behaviour by British soldiers. In Gujarat, fears of a Japanese invasion and a ‘scorched earth’ strategy resulted in widespread hoarding, heightened insecurity, increased self-defence efforts, and growing distrust of British authorities, who were seen as favouring Europeans during evacuations. Similarly, in Bengal, rumours of imminent defeat and military failures fuelled acts of defiance, such as people refusing to work in important sectors such as ports and withholding food supplies from British soldiers.

◆ *Bose’s ultimatum and Gandhi’s opposition*

#### 4.3.2.2 Background of the Quit India Movement

During the early stages of World War II, the Congress Working Committee banned participation in the war effort but supported Britain’s anti-Fascist stance. However, there were significant internal disagreements within the Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose, who was re-elected as Congress President in 1938, wanted to confront Britain with an ultimatum to free India or face direct action. Gandhi opposed this, leading to Bose’s ousting in May 1939. Jawaharlal Nehru also had differing views, advocating for an immediate declaration of independence as a precondition for supporting the war.

◆ *Demand for freedom*

In September 1939, the Congress Working Committee demanded Britain clearly state its war aims and recognise India’s freedom. Despite this, no significant political concessions were made to enlist Indian cooperation. By the summer of 1940, the Axis powers’ aggression increased India’s importance in British imperial defence. Viceroy Linlithgow’s ‘August Offer’ of 1940, promising political concessions, fell short of expectations, failing to address the broader political aspirations of the Congress. Gandhi launched an ‘individual satyagraha’ against British war efforts. British authorities prepared for potential civil unrest with repressive measures designed to suppress dissent.

◆ *Preparations for Quit India*

The failure of the Cripps' Mission in April 1942 further exacerbated differences within the Congress. Following this, the British Cabinet did not demand a 'national government' in India, leading to increased authoritarian rule in the provinces and support for repression of the Quit India Movement. By the spring of 1942, Gandhi was becoming more convinced that a major struggle was inevitable. By August 1942, preparations were underway for the Quit India Movement.

◆ *Quit India Resolution*  
◆ *'Do or Die'*

The AICC's resolution in July 1942 called for civil disobedience if the British did not meet their demands. This led to the formal launch of the Quit India Movement on August 8, 1942, at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Bombay. The Quit India Resolution, modified by Nehru, was adopted. Gandhi's speech included the famous mantra 'Do or Die.'

◆ *Immediate repression*

The British government, anticipating unrest, arrested the entire Congress leadership, including Gandhi and Nehru, within hours of the movement's launch. This action aimed to prevent organised resistance and neutralise leadership. The arrest of top leaders led to the initiative passing to lower-rank political workers, students, and common people.

◆ *Revolutionary Ordinance*

A secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle on 17 July 1942 aimed to mobilise public opinion against Congress by portraying their actions as aiding Axis powers. The British government contemplated deporting Gandhi and other leaders to East Africa. The British government employed repressive measures, including the Revolutionary Movements Ordinance and the Special Criminal Courts Ordinance, to curb the movement and suppress dissent. The Revolutionary Movements' Ordinance was signed on 12 August 1942 to suppress the movement, although it was not issued due to existing powers under the Defence of India Rules (DIR).

◆ *Special Courts Ordinance*

The government also enforced the Special Criminal Courts Ordinance II of 1942, allowing summary jurisdiction over suspected offenders. Despite this, judicial reluctance to ratify government actions persisted. The British faced severe criticism, including from the London Tribune, for their repressive measures. Despite increased repression, nationalist uprisings continued in various parts of India, notably in Gujarat, Satara, Ballia, Medinipur, and Bihar.

The Twelve-point Programme was developed by Congress leaders. This broad program encompassed various forms



◆ *Twelve-point Programme*

of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience, including strikes, tax refusal, and the setting up of parallel governments. The program's diverse approach aimed to engage various sections of society in the struggle.

◆ *Role of rumours and underground literature*

Underground literature and press censorship became prominent as nationalist fervour spread. Widespread rumours about British defeat and the potential for Japanese invasion fuelled public anxiety and contributed to unrest. With official press censorship, underground literature circulated widely, maintaining the movement's momentum and spreading revolutionary ideas.

#### 4.3.2.3 Spread of the Quit India Movement

◆ *Urban centers*

The Quit India Movement, initiated in August 1942, unfolded in two phases: an initial mass movement and a subsequent quasi-guerrilla insurgency. In cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur, Lucknow, Nagpur, and Delhi, strikes and violent clashes marked the early days. In Bombay, strike actions from 9-14 August 1942 disrupted the city's economy, with significant resistance from millworkers and other activists. Meanwhile, in Calcutta, strikes and demonstrations occurred from 10-17 August. Both cities experienced violent clashes and mass mobilisation, highlighting the movement's intensity in urban areas. In Delhi, violent confrontations with millworkers occurred. Government control was challenged as protests intensified. While in Patna, police lost control for two days following clashes in front of the Secretariat on 11 August 1942.

◆ *Rural spread*

The movement quickly spread to rural areas as activists, including militant students, fled the cities. Inflammatory underground publications fueled mass participation. Despite its rapid spread, the movement waned within weeks due to government repression and the arrest of key leaders. However, the initial intensity caught the British government by surprise, leading to a temporary collapse of authority in several regions.

In Western India, the movement grew slowly. Still, it gained momentum, extending into 1943 and beyond in districts like East Khandesh, Satara, Broach, and Surat, where guerrilla-style attacks were common on government property and infrastructure. Cities like Pune, Ahmadnagar, and Ahmedabad saw prolonged protests, with Ahmedabad being referred to as the 'Stalingrad of India' for its resistance. The Gujarat Vyayam Prachark Mandal, led by Chhotubhai

◆ *Western India resistance*

Purani, played a significant role in training young men for violent struggle despite Gandhi's principles of non-violence. The movement in Gujarat was characterised by intense urban participation but limited rural engagement, with a notable absence of Muslims from protests due to shifting political loyalties. In Baroda State, protests led to the moderate Praja Mandal leaders supporting the Quit India Movement. Meanwhile, Kheda District is known for strong rural agitation, with significant resistance and revenue refusal from the beginning. The movement was marked by mass protests and violence.

◆ *Bihar and UP insurrections*

In Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, initial urban riots gave way to rural insurrections where armed villagers targeted administrative centres, police posts, and local courts. Rich peasants and local leaders dominated the movement, supported by the Kisan Sabha. Bihar's underground movement grew strong, with several dacoit gangs and terrorist organisations emerging by 1943. These groups, often linked with the Congress Socialist Party, filled the political vacuum and received support from villagers. Jayaprakash Narayan formed a parallel government on the Nepal border, while regions like Ballia in Eastern UP experienced significant police station captures.

◆ *Bengal's turmoil*

Bengal experienced significant turmoil during the Quit India Movement, a situation worsened by the devastating 1943 famine, which claimed an estimated 3 million lives. The harsh wartime administration and widespread suffering intensified public outrage. In Medinipur, a parallel government named 'Mahabharata Yuktarashtra: Tamralipta Jatiya Sarkar' was established. The government continued its activities until 1944 despite severe repression. The underground movement was strong, particularly in urban centres, though rural engagement was limited. The presence of the Congress since the Non-Cooperation Movement and wartime hardships contributed to the heightened protest.

◆ *Satara's Prati Sarkar*

In Satara, Maharashtra, the Satyashodhak Samaj provided the base for the Quit India Movement. The movement here included sabotage, jailbreaks, and armed encounters with the police force, leading to the formation of a parallel government called 'Prati Sarkar' in 1943. This government carried out constructive and military tasks, with volunteer squads organised as Rashtra Seva Dal and Tufan Dal. The movement was dominated by the 'bahujan samaj,' encompassing various castes and classes, though Dalits





and women were under-represented. Despite Gandhi's call to surrender in 1944, the Prati Sarkar continued its activities until the naval mutiny (RIN mutiny) in 1946.

◆ *Underground activities*

Nationalists in various parts of India, including Bombay, Poona, Satara, Baroda, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, United Provinces, Bihar, and Delhi, engaged in subversive activities. Key figures included Rammanohar Lohia, Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta, Biju Patnaik, Chhotubhai Puranik, Achyut Patwardhan, Sucheta Kripalani, and R.P. Goenka. Usha Mehta started an underground radio in Bombay to maintain popular morale and distribute arms and ammunition.

### 4.3.3 End of the World War and the Consequences in India

◆ *Political shift*

The end of World War II was a major shift in the political scenario in India, though the country did not fully celebrate the defeat of the Nazi forces. India did not have the assurances it required to be able to participate actively in the defense of the Allies. Nonetheless, a terrible period of food scarcity brought on by drought, government negligence, inflation, and black marketing – which ultimately resulted in famine – was alleviated by the end of hostilities.

◆ *Release of prisoners*

With the end of the war came the release of political prisoners, including Congress leaders. Gandhiji had been released earlier, in May 1944, due to ill health, and he lost his wife, Kasturba, and his long-time companion, Mahadev Desai. After his release, Gandhiji engaged in constructive work, which soon became the primary activity of Congressmen. Almost a year before the war's official end in May 1945, the Indian government began discussing a settlement between the Congress and the League. The government aimed to establish a coalition government representing both communities to address the anticipated political and economic instability during the post-war period. This included challenges like demobilising army personnel, managing economic inflation, and releasing political prisoners.

Many members of the Congress had been imprisoned and opposed the war effort in 1939–1940 or taken part in the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement. Others were imprisoned for their participation in the Quit India Movement in 1942. The war had been long and arduous for everyone, and there was significant relief at its end and the release of political prisoners. When national leaders toured

◆ *Renewed vigour*

the country after their release, they sensed that British departure was imminent, perhaps within two to five years, as noted in Nehru's speech reported in the Fortnightly Report for the first half of October 1945 from the United Provinces. Rather than the quiet people they had expected, they encountered excited crowds, their resolve hardened by wartime repression.

◆ *Public enthusiasm*

During the war, no political activity had been permitted. With leaders in jail and anti-British political parties banned, people found it impossible to be involved in any political activity. The release of leaders and the legalisation of political parties were awaited with great expectations. A new era seemed to be heralded, promising significant strides towards freedom. People demonstrated their excitement and support by climbing treetops, waving, and surrounding the leaders' cars. They braved inclement weather to welcome Congress leaders and workers, stopping trains carrying leaders intermittently with insistent crowds. Similar scenes occurred when leaders went to Simla for a conference called by the Viceroy and in Bombay, where half a million people turned out to welcome the Congress Working Committee after three years.

◆ *Labour's victory*

The post-war elections in Britain resulted in an unexpected victory for the Labour Party despite Churchill's status as a national hero. Practical concerns about post-war reconstruction led to Labour's win. This shift signalled changes for India, though Labour's colonial policies remained mostly imperialist. Civil liberties were restored, and elections were scheduled for the winter of 1945-1946. The Congress welcomed the opportunity to form provincial ministries and elect representatives for the forthcoming constitution-making body.

◆ *Massive mobilisation*

Election meetings in India became arenas of political mobilisation, surprising even leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru. Congress candidates excelled, winning over ninety percent of general seats, while the Muslim League swept Muslim constituencies. The campaign turned into a massive exercise in mobilising the people, focusing on issues such as the brutal repression of the Quit India movement and the fate of INA prisoners.

A major issue in the election campaign was the unprecedented repression during the Quit India movement.



◆ *Repression focus*

The Congress leaders promised to investigate and punish officials guilty of excesses, which majorly impacted the morale of the administration. This was particularly true in provinces like U.P. and Bihar, where the repression had been severe.

#### 4.3.4 Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army (INA)

◆ *Subhas Chandra Bose's early Life and political career*

Subhas Chandra Bose was a passionate and militant leader in the Indian independence movement. After securing the fourth position in the Indian Civil Services examination, he resigned in 1921 to join the Congress Party, influenced by his mentor, Chittaranjan Das. He became the Mayor of Calcutta in 1923 and was imprisoned multiple times by the British for his activism. Disillusioned with Gandhi's approach to independence, Bose chose a more aggressive path.

◆ *Anti-compromise Conference and early struggles*

In March 1940, Bose organised the Anti-Compromise Conference at Ramgarh, calling for a global struggle against British imperialism. On April 6, 1940, he urged Indians not to support the British war effort in any form. His resistance gained widespread public support. However, Bose was arrested in July 1940 for protesting against a proposed monument for Holwell in Calcutta. He was later released but placed under house arrest.

◆ *Escape and international support*

In January 1941, Bose escaped from house arrest under the alias Ziauddin, reaching Peshawar with the help of Bhagat Ram. He sought international support for India's freedom struggle and approached Russia, but after Russia joined the Allies in June 1941, Bose turned to Germany.

◆ *Formation of the Indian National Army (INA)*

Bose met Hitler in Germany under the name Orlando Mazzotta. With German support, he formed the Indian National Army (INA), consisting of Indian prisoners of war captured by Germany and Italy. The INA was headquartered in Dresden, Germany. Bose, who was affectionately called 'Netaji' by the Germans, made radio broadcasts from Berlin to inspire Indians.

◆ *Second phase of the INA*

In early 1943, Bose travelled to Japan and Singapore to lead the INA from Rashbehari Bose, who had previously organised the Indian Independence League. Bose became the Supreme Commander of the INA on August 25, 1943. He also established a Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore, which declared war on Britain and the United States and was recognised by the Axis powers. A women's

regiment called the Rani Jhansi Regiment was formed.

♦ *INA's Campaign and Challenges*

The INA was active during the Quit India Movement, with recruits trained and funds collected. The headquarters moved to Rangoon (Burma) in January 1944, and the INA began its campaign with the slogan "Chalo Delhi!" On October 21, 1943, the Japanese handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the INA, renaming them Shahid Dweep and Swaraj Dweep.

♦ *Setbacks and Final Days*

In 1944, the INA crossed into India and captured Moirang in Manipur on April 14, where it hoisted its flag for the first time on Indian soil. However, the INA faced discrimination from the Japanese and was eventually forced to retreat as Japanese forces withdrew. The INA's hopes for liberating India were dashed. After Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945, the INA also surrendered. Subhas Bose reportedly died in an air crash in Taipei on August 18, 1945. The INA's return to India led to a powerful movement in their defence.

#### 4.3.4.1 INA Trials

♦ *INA trials*

In September 1945, at the first Congress session after World War II in Bombay, the Congress passed a strong resolution supporting the Indian National Army (INA) cause. Leaders like Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Kailash Nath Katju, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Asaf Ali organised the defence of INA prisoners in court. At the same time, the INA Relief and Enquiry Committee provided financial aid, food, and job assistance to those affected. The campaign to release INA prisoners gained unprecedented intensity and widespread publicity through press coverage, pamphlets, graffiti, public meetings, and celebrations such as INA Day (November 12, 1945) and INA Week (November 5-11). The trials at the Red Fort became a focal point of national attention, with Congress meetings often indistinguishable from INA rallies.

♦ *Widespread support*

The agitation spread across the country, involving diverse social groups and political parties, with key centres in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Punjab, and even reaching distant areas like Coorg, Baluchistan, and Assam. Participation took many forms, including fund contributions from people like film stars, municipal committees, Indians abroad, and gurudwaras, along with shop closures and political demands for the prisoners' release. Students were particularly active, holding meetings and boycotting classes. All political parties, including the Congress, the Communist Party, and the Muslim League, supported the cause. The



Viceroy noted the unanimous support across parties, with the Congress being the most vocal.

♦ *Broad sympathy*

The most significant aspect of the INA campaign was its inclusion of traditionally loyalist groups and government officials, showing large sympathy for the INA cause. The movement underlined the right of Indians to determine their future, directly challenging British authority. This widespread support indicated a united national sentiment and a shift towards an inclusive nationalist movement.

### 4.3.5 Royal Indian Naval Mutiny

♦ *Popular uprisings*

Following the general campaign for the release of INA prisoners, a series of popular uprisings occurred between November 1945 and February 1946, characterised by violent clashes and widespread protests. These events, including the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolt, reflected severe discontent and solidarity among different sections of Indian society. However, the upsurges were short-lived, primarily involved militant urban groups, and did not directly touch the rural population.

♦ *Major incidents*

The movement for the release of INA prisoners culminated in violent clashes in late 1945 and early 1946. Major incidents included, on 21st November 1945, a student procession in Calcutta protesting the INA trials that led to violent confrontations, resulting in two deaths and widespread strikes. Shops owned by Europeans were targeted, and all these incidents paralysed the city. On 11<sup>th</sup> February 1946, protests against the sentencing of INA officer Rashid Ali led to clashes in Calcutta and other cities, with attacks on government and European properties. Meanwhile, on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1946, the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) revolt began with 1100 naval ratings of HMIS *Talwar* protesting racial humiliation (demanding equal pay for Indian and white soldiers), unpalatable food, abuse by superior officers, the arrest of a rating for writing 'Quit India' on the ship, the INA trials, and the use of Indian troops in Indonesia, demanding their withdrawal. The rebellious ratings hoisted the tricolour, crescent, and hammer and sickle flags on the mast of the rebel fleet. As the strike spread, other ratings joined in, driving around Bombay in lorries with Congress flags, threatening Europeans and police officers. The local population supported them by bringing food, and shopkeepers offered supplies to the striking ratings. This led to widespread strikes and violence in Bombay and other naval centres, involving 20,000 ratings from 78 ships and 20 shore establishments.



◆ *Urban phenomena*

It is argued that these events, while displaying large solidarity and discontent, were primarily urban phenomena involving militant sections of society. They did not directly impact the rural population. The unity shown between Hindu and Muslim communities was more organisational than genuine social cohesion, as different groups still sought guidance from their respective leaders.

◆ *British response*

The perception that these uprisings shook the British Empire to its foundations is contested. While they eroded colonial authority, the British maintained their ability to repress dissent. The use of troops to suppress protests and the effective rounding up of striking ratings by Maratha troops indicated the continued repressive power of the colonial state.

◆ *Cabinet Mission*

The claim that the Cabinet Mission was sent to India in response to the RIN revolt is contested, as the decision was made in January 1947 and announced in February. Hence, it is not related to the naval strike. Rather than these particular upsurges, the British trend towards a political settlement was affected by the long-term degradation of their credibility brought about by years of nonviolent resistance.

◆ *Congress's stance*

While individual Congress members participated in the protests and condemned repression, the overall leadership believed the time was not right for an all-India struggle. They emphasised negotiation and settlement as the primary strategy, with direct action as a reserved option. The understanding was that colonial rule was nearing its end, and a cautious approach was necessary to avoid jeopardising the possibility of a final settlement.

### 4.3.6 Major Political Developments in the Post-War Period

Let us now look at the major political and constitutional changes from the end of World War II in 1945 to the end of 1946, including the Simla Conference, the 1945-46 elections, the formation of provincial ministries, the Cabinet Mission, the Interim Government, and Direct Action by the Muslim League, along with Gandhi's interventions in Noakhali and Bihar.

Before the Simla Conference, several attempts were made to resolve the deadlock between Congress and the Muslim League. The C. Rajagopalachari Formula (1944) proposed that the Muslim League could seek a separate

♦ *Congress-Muslim League Deadlock*

state after independence if a plebiscite in Muslim-majority areas supported it. However, Jinnah rejected this since it did not immediately grant Pakistan. In 1945, the Desai-Liaquat Pact aimed to form an interim government with equal representation for Congress and the Muslim League, but it also failed to gain approval. Around the same time, the Wavell Plan suggested reorganising the Viceroy's Executive Council with balanced representation, but disagreements over the demand for Pakistan led to its rejection too.

#### 4.3.6.1 Simla Conference, 1945

♦ *India's post-war political issues*

In June-July 1945, the Simla Conference, called by Viceroy Lord Wavell at the Viceregal Lodge, aimed to address India's post-war political issues. Wavell sought to establish a settlement involving the Congress and the Muslim League, with the goal of strengthening British influence and securing India's position within the Commonwealth. The settlement included representation on the Executive Council, coalition ministries in provinces, and elections for the Constituent Assembly.

♦ *Objectives*

Congress leaders, including Gandhi and Maulana Azad, attended the Conference. Gandhi, despite not holding an official position, offered advisory support. The main issue was Jinnah's claim that the Muslim League was the sole representative of Muslims, which the Congress disputed, asserting its right to represent all Indians, including Muslims. The British faced pressure from the Unionist Party of the Punjab, representing both Muslims and Hindus. Ultimately, the British chose to support Jinnah and the League, reflecting their wartime alignment with the League. Despite this, Congress continued resistance.

#### 4.3.6.2 Elections of 1945-46

♦ *Claims of League*

Following the failed Simla Conference hopes for political progress were revived with the Labour Party's rise to power in Britain. The Labour Government announced that elections for central and provincial assemblies would be held in late 1945 and early 1946. The main competitors were the Congress and the Muslim League. The Muslim League aimed to strengthen its claim for Pakistan by winning a majority in Muslim-majority provinces. Despite organisational weaknesses, it benefited from active support from religious leaders and local patronage networks, particularly in Punjab.

The Congress campaign focused on anti-British sentiments,

◆ *Focus of the Congress*

emphasising issues like the release of INA prisoners and punishment for officials responsible for excesses in 1942. Although the Congress did not strongly oppose the League's demand for Pakistan, it underestimated the importance of the issue, leading to ineffective efforts to counter the League's appeal. The Congress faced challenges in finding effective Muslim candidates and dealing with nationalist Muslim organisations, which were often aligned with the League.

◆ *Election Results*

In the Central Assembly (December 1945), Congress won 57 seats, League 30, Independents 5, Akalis 2, and Europeans 8 out of 102 seats. In provincial assemblies, the Congress secured 923 of 1585 seats, while the League dominated Muslim seats, winning majorities in Bengal, Sind, and Punjab. The League obtained 76% of the Muslim vote in India, a crucial increase from previous elections.

◆ *Aftermath*

The Congress formed governments in several provinces, including Madras, Bombay, and the United Provinces, while the League established ministries in Bengal and Sind. In Punjab, negotiations for a coalition involving the League, Akalis, and Congress failed, leading to a coalition ministry with Akalis, Unionists, and Congress. The elections reflected the Congress's broad representation across India, while the Muslim League emerged as the dominant representative of Muslims, setting the stage for further political developments.

#### **4.3.6.3 British Decision to Withdraw from India**

◆ *Impact of WWII*

By the end of World War II, the influence of the colonial state in India was remarkably declining. The once-effective ideological tools used by the British to maintain control were no longer serving their purpose. Major pillars of the colonial regime—such as the army and bureaucracy—were showing signs of erosion. Indian recruits had begun to outnumber British ones, and the morale of British officials had deteriorated due to prolonged service and nationalist protests. This decline in colonial hegemony was evident to both British officials and the Indian population.

◆ *Congress approach*

The Congress approach, according to Bipan Chandra, was a cycle of 'struggle-truce-struggle,' which presented a unique challenge for colonial officials. This strategy, alternating between phases of intense conflict and short-term peace, was challenging for the British authorities to handle, which further led to dissatisfaction among loyalists. The brutal repression of the Quit India Movement and the government's indifference to Gandhi's hunger strike in 1943



further undermined support for colonial rule.

♦ *Lack of efficient officials*

By late 1945, the British government faced a situation of 'responsibility without power.' Concerns grew that the Congress-led provincial governments would support a future revolt. The Viceroy feared that the British could suppress such a revolt but would struggle to maintain effective governance due to a shortage of capable officials.

♦ *Decision to withdraw*

In late 1946, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee decided that Britain could no longer maintain colonial rule in India through force. Several reasons influenced this decision: the British administrative system was not strong enough to enforce control, their military was engaged in other international commitments, there was growing opposition within the Labour Party, and there were concerns about the loyalty of Indian troops as well as reluctance from British soldiers to serve. Furthermore, there was negative international opinion and pressure from the United Nations. Realising that continuing colonial rule was no longer practical, Britain aimed for a smooth exit from India. This meant starting negotiations about how to transfer power and establish new post-imperial relations.

♦ *Major developments*

Let us have a look at some of the key developments that happened during this time. On January 1, 1946, the British Secretary of State signalled Britain's intention to leave India soon. Later, on February 19, 1946, Attlee announced a three-member Cabinet Mission to India to establish a constitutional framework for the transfer of power. The decision to send this mission was made on January 22, 1946. The British government considered a phased withdrawal, but this plan was not adopted. Concerns about managing power effectively after March 1948 led to the consideration of a time limit.

♦ *Congress reaction*

The Congress, recognising the impending independence, was willing to wait for concrete offers while keeping preparations for mass movements in case of failed negotiations. As Gandhi remarked, with a great nation announcing its intent to quit, there was little to lose by waiting for the substance of the offers.

♦ *India's unity*

By early 1946, the British decided that it was preferable for India to remain united when they left. This shift in policy from supporting communal forces to favouring unity was driven by both short-term and long-term strategic considerations. The British aimed to ensure a stable transition by aligning with the Congress, as Pakistan seemed impractical to some

British officials. Despite some officials preferring Jinnah and the Muslim League, the consensus favoured maintaining a united India.

#### 4.3.6.4 Cabinet Mission Plan (1946)

##### ◆ *Cabinet Mission Plan*

The Cabinet Mission Plan of May and June 1946 proposed a federal structure with three groups of provinces, each having the option to leave after elections. The central government would manage foreign affairs, defence, and communications. The Congress and the Muslim League had different interpretations of the plan. The Congress favoured a strong central government, while the League wanted to retain the option to question the constitution sooner.

##### ◆ *Mission's contradictions*

The contradictory assurances of the Mission to both the Congress and the League caused confusion. The Congress understood it as permitting provinces to choose not to be in the groups, while the League saw it as a partial acceptance of Pakistan. The Viceroy's personal bias towards the League further complicated negotiations. The Congress's insistence on its right to form the Constituent Assembly led to the League withdrawing its support.

##### ◆ *Popular government*

As British authority waned, a popular government seemed imminent. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State agreed on this need but differed on whether the government should be Congress-dominated. The British feared that a Congress government might negatively impact foreign policy and bring uncomfortable issues from the past. Despite these concerns, the British were willing to accommodate Congress's positions to avoid a complete break.

##### ◆ *Congress Interim Government*

#### 4.3.6.5 Interim Government

On September 2, 1946, a Congress Interim Government was established with Jawaharlal Nehru as Vice-President of the Executive Council. This was a crucial step toward Indian independence, accompanied by celebrations. However, the Muslim League, having declared civil war and withdrawn from the Cabinet Mission Plan, did not join the government, leading to instability. The Viceroy and British officials, fearing civil war and communal violence, sought to include the League in the government.

##### ◆ *League's non-cooperation*

Despite the formation of the Interim Government, the League continued its direct action approach and did not send its most prominent leaders to the administration. League minister Ghazanfar Ali Khan openly criticised the





government, and other League members engaged in civil disobedience and anti-Congress activities. Nehru's protests were ignored, and the League's non-cooperation policy escalated tensions.

#### 4.3.7 Communal Politics and the Partition

##### ◆ *League's demands*

The League's refusal to cooperate fully with the Interim Government and its disruptive actions led the Congress leaders to consider that partition might be unavoidable. Gandhi, however, believed that a coalition with the League was impractical and advised proceeding with a Constituent Assembly. The Congress's frustration grew with the League's refusal to join the Assembly. It culminated in the League's demand for the dissolution of the Assembly and the Cabinet Mission Plan.

##### ◆ *Pakistan demand*

The demand for Pakistan, initially articulated in March 1940, became more pronounced by 1946. At the Muslim League convention in April 1946, it was declared that Pakistan would be a unified country, even if geographically divided. The League threatened severe violence if the British imposed unity, and Jinnah called for direct action to achieve Pakistan. The League's withdrawal from the Cabinet Mission Plan and Jinnah's shift from constitutional methods to direct action signalled a radical approach.

##### ◆ *Direct Action Day and Calcutta riots*

The declaration of 'Direct Action Day' on August 16, 1946, led to violent clashes in Calcutta, where the Muslim League government, led by H. S. Suhrawardy, was accused of inciting riots. The violence resulted in notable casualties and was perceived as a move towards civil war by Gandhi, Patel, and Nehru. Later scholars like Ayesha Jalal suggested that the responsibility for the violence in Calcutta lay with the religious leaders, or mullahs and pirs, who were brought in to make Direct Action effective. Jinnah's threat of violence was not taken seriously by the British or the Congress initially.

##### ◆ *Noakhali and Tippera violence*

The communal violence extended to Noakhali and Tippera in East Bengal from October 10, 1946. This violence included not just killings but also forced conversions and abductions. The government's indifference and mistrust of local officials charged the situation, and the Congress leaders felt powerless to stop the terror. Gandhi's intervention aimed to restore communal harmony, though his efforts were only partially successful due to the deep-seated strife.

Following Noakhali, riots erupted in Bihar, leading to more

◆ *Bihar riots and Gandhi's efforts*

violence and casualties. The League encouraged migration to Bengal, further inflaming tensions. Gandhi's visit to Bihar in March 1947 focused on promoting repentance among Hindus and facilitating the return of Muslim victims to their homes. Despite his efforts, the scale of violence in Punjab, beginning with Rawalpindi, overshadowed previous conflicts and led to a new phase of civil war.

◆ *Interim Government*

The violence in Calcutta reinforced the Viceroy's belief that the Muslim League should be included in the Interim Government. Nehru, however, condemned this as 'shaking hands with murder' and rejected the idea. Jinnah warned that the establishment of a Congress Interim Government would lead to severe and disastrous consequences.

#### 4.3.7.1 Mountbatten and Partition

◆ *Announcement of withdrawal*

Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of British India, advanced the date for British withdrawal to 15 August 1947 after initial plans suggested a later exit. The Congress reluctantly accepted the partition of India. However, they rejected the idea of a two-nation theory, a stance also echoed by Gandhi, who urged people not to internalise the partition. The British Government framed the withdrawal as a step forward in decolonisation, not merely a retreat.

◆ *Resignation demands*

The Cabinet Mission Plan aimed to reconcile the opposing views of the Congress and the Muslim League. While the Congress saw it as a means to avoid partition, the League accepted it as a step towards Pakistan. Talks in London in December 1946 failed to resolve the differences, leading to continued deadlock. The Interim Government, intended to be a collaborative body, was marred by obstructionist tactics from the Muslim League. This non-cooperation led to severe dysfunction within the government, as the League members challenged Congress' decisions and appointments. By February 1947, the Congress demanded the resignation of League members due to their disruptive behaviour. The League's refusal to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan's terms and their push for Pakistan only deepened the crisis.

◆ *Gandhi's proposal*

Gandhi attempted to break the deadlock by proposing a plan to Mountbatten that involved the Congress support for a League-led government. However, this plan faced opposition and was eventually withdrawn, reflecting the nuances and mistrust within Congress.

Meanwhile, the political atmosphere in Punjab and Bengal

◆ *Communal violence*

became increasingly turbulent. The League's influence and civil unrest led to the call for the partition of these provinces. The Congress's eventual resolution to partition these provinces was driven by escalating violence and political manoeuvring. Communal violence in Bengal and Punjab underscored the need for partition. The Congress and the League's negotiations reflected a broader struggle between unity and division. The Viceroy Mountbatten and Jinnah's arguments about cultural unity contrasted with the practical necessity of partition to address the violence and unrest.

◆ *United Bengal Proposal*

Suhrawardy's campaign for a united Bengal was supported by the Viceroy Mountbatten. But, it clashed with the League's acceptance of the partition plan. Despite Gandhi's opposition to partition, the final plan included partitioning Bengal, as decided by the All India Muslim League Council.

◆ *Partition chaos*

In the initial months of Mountbatten's tenure as Viceroy, he attempted to build consensus between Indian political parties but quickly realised that the Cabinet Mission Plan was no longer viable. Jinnah's insistence on Pakistan made compromise difficult, leading Mountbatten to conclude that partition was inevitable. Mountbatten Plan, popularly known as the 3rd June Plan, which advanced the British withdrawal date to 15 August 1947, proved inadequate for the partition. The rushed and poorly executed boundary demarcation led to chaos, with many towns and villages unsure of their new national affiliations on the day of independence.

◆ *Gandhi's critique of the British strategy*

Mountbatten's move to expedite the withdrawal aimed to secure the Congress's agreement to dominion status. It also allowed the British to evade responsibility for the escalating communal tensions. The British government's goal was a smooth exit and the establishment of relations with both new dominions, India and Pakistan while presenting partition as a fair solution. Gandhiji criticised the British government's attempt to appease all parties instead of supporting unity. The British did not genuinely pursue unity but rather sought to balance demands by presenting partition as the best possible outcome, which Gandhi found a superficial solution.

◆ *Nehru's concerns*

By mid-April 1947, it was decided that provinces would have to join either India or Pakistan and could not remain independent. The British aimed to present the transfer of power as a result of Indian decisions rather than British imposition. The Viceroy was firm on limiting partition to two states and avoiding fragmentation. Nehru was alarmed by

the proposed drafts in May 1947, fearing they would lead to fragmentation and civil conflict. He was concerned about the potential for large Muslim-majority areas to opt out of the Union. Jinnah, meanwhile, remained steadfast in his demand for Pakistan, diminishing prospects for a negotiated settlement.

◆ *Mountbatten's Proposal*

◆ *Jinnah's Independence*

Mountbatten suggested serving as Governor-General for both India and Pakistan to maintain a connection between the two dominions. Jinnah, however, opted to assume the role of Governor-General of Pakistan himself to assert independence from British influence. Efforts to create a joint defence mechanism between the two states were undermined by the Kashmir conflict in October 1947.

◆ *Debate over acceptance*

◆ *Gandhi's proposal and concerns*

The acceptance of Partition by the Congress and Gandhi is debated, with some attributing it to British divide-and-rule policies, historical Hindu-Muslim rifts, or a deal between the British and Indian bourgeoisie. Critics argue it was driven by Congress leaders' desire for a strong central government or their lust for power. Despite opposition to Jinnah's two-nation theory, the Congress and Gandhi accepted Partition as the best option under the circumstances. Gandhiji suggested that Jinnah be made prime minister to appease his ambitions and potentially abandon the demand for Pakistan. However, this was deemed too risky by the Congress leaders, who feared it could lead to a reactionary backlash or be seen as a betrayal. As a result, Gandhiji withdrew his proposal.

◆ *Challenges of communal conciliation*

◆ *Acceptance of Partition over force*

In mid-April 1947, Gandhi and Jinnah appealed for peace, but Patel doubted Jinnah's sincerity and noted that appeasing him was not effective. By summer, Congress leaders recognised that conciliating communal forces was futile. Nehru described Jinnah's demands as unreasonable, while Patel insisted on no further appeasement of the Muslim League. Some Congress leaders, like P.D. Tandon and Ram Ratan Gupta, suggested imposing unity by force, which they condemned as a betrayal. However, Congress leaders chose acceptance of Pakistan to avoid civil war and violence. Nehru and Kripalani believed that maintaining unity by force would lead to long-term instability and violence.

The Congress presented Partition as a principle of self-determination rather than a communal division. Gandhiji emphasised that the decision reflected the will of various communities and was made to end violence. Nehru and Kripalani argued that no part of India should be coerced



- ◆ *Partition as Self-determination*
- ◆ *Temporary nature of Partition*

into staying if it wished to leave. The Congress hoped that Partition would be temporary and that common interests might eventually lead to reunification. Nehru and Gandhiji both expressed that the division was seen as a temporary measure to stop violence and that efforts should avoid actions reinforcing Partition. Partition allowed the Congress to focus on consolidating power in the remaining parts of India. Nehru saw it as an opportunity to build a strong central government, while Patel and Jayaprakash Narayan viewed it as a chance to strengthen the Union.

- ◆ *Gandhi's efforts*
- ◆ *Communal pressures on Congress*

Gandhiji's attempts to prevent communal violence through non-violent methods had limited impact. Despite his efforts in Noakhali and Bihar, communal distrust persisted, and both Hindu and Muslim communal organisations gained influence. Gandhi was criticised for his methods, which were seen as insufficient in the face of rising communalism. After the Partition, there was pressure on the Congress to represent Hindu interests more than national unity. Some saw Congress as a Hindu body rather than a national one. The Congress leaders struggled to maintain their national character amid these pressures. Independence Day was a mix of celebration and mourning, reflecting both the success of achieving independence and the failure to integrate the majority of Muslims into the national movement.

### Timeline

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1937 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inauguration of Provincial Autonomy as per the Government of India Act of 1935</li> <li>• The elections under the new act resulted in the Congress forming ministries in eight provinces.</li> </ul> |
| 1939 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War II begins</li> <li>• Lord Linlithgow's August Offer</li> <li>• Muslim League adopts Lahore Resolution</li> </ul>                                                                           |
| 1942 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cripps Mission fails</li> <li>• Quit India Movement</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       |
| 1944 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gandhi-Jinnah Talks</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 1945 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour Party Victory in England</li> <li>• Trial of Indian National Army Prisoners</li> </ul>                                                                                                        |
| 1946 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal Indian Navy Mutiny</li> <li>• Cabinet Mission to India</li> <li>• Interim Government established</li> <li>• Hindu-Muslim Riots</li> </ul>                                                      |



## Summarised Overview

During World War II, the British autocratic decision to bring India into the war sidelined Indian leaders' aspirations for independence. The resignation of Congress ministries marked a critical juncture in India's struggle for freedom, demonstrating political deadlock and divergent views between Congress, the Muslim League, and the British government. Despite British efforts to maintain control and offer concessions, the push for independence gained momentum, setting the stage for further resistance and eventual freedom from colonial rule.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 represents a significant and radical phase in the Indian independence struggle, marked by mass mobilisation and a departure from previous Gandhian methods. It was deeply intertwined with the global conflict of World War II and its repercussions on Indian society. The movement exhibited common features across different regions, such as the appropriation of nationalist symbols by popular classes.

After World War II, it became evident that British colonial rule was nearing its end. The election of a Labour government in Britain contributed to a lessening of imperialist attitudes. In India, elections were highly polarised along communal lines, with the Congress securing most general seats and the Muslim League dominating reserved Muslim seats. This period saw widespread national upsurges, including the campaign for INA prisoner's release, the RIN revolt, peasant revolts in Bengal, Punjab, and Kerala, and extensive strikes by industrial workers.

The British government, unable to retain India due to exhaustion from World War II, a lack of suitable personnel, and increasing protests against colonial rule, sought to maintain ties through the Commonwealth and initially aimed for a unified India. However, the Muslim League's violence and demand for Pakistan made it challenging to enforce unity. The period between 1945 and 1947 was marked by significant upheaval, anti-colonial movements, demonstrations against British rule, and elections highlighting communal divisions. The British withdrawal and communal riots led to the eventual acceptance of Partition by major political parties. The dawn of independence was met with triumph and anguish.



## Assignments

1. Discuss how World War II influenced the political atmosphere in British India.
2. Evaluate the nature of the Quit India Movement. What were the factors that contributed to the shift in its character?
3. Evaluate the impact of British repressive measures on the Quit India Movement. How did these measures affect the course of the movement and its eventual decline?
4. Explain the significance of the RIN Mutiny in the Indian National Movement.
5. Examine the factors that led to the decision for the Partition of India in 1947. How did the political, social, and economic circumstances contribute to this decision, and what role did figures such as Mountbatten, Nehru, and Jinnah play in the process?

## Suggested Reading

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## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





## Making of a Nation

### Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the key provisions and impact of the Mountbatten Plan and the Indian Independence Act
- ◆ analyse the process and challenges of integrating princely states into India
- ◆ examine the drafting and importance of the Indian Constitution

### Background

In early 1947, India was in a state of political turmoil. The country faced a major crisis with the refusal of the Muslim League to work with the Constituent Assembly, and Congress threatened to withdraw from the Interim Government. In this tense atmosphere, the British government decided to take decisive action to resolve the impasse. On February 20, 1947, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee made a significant announcement. He set a clear deadline for transferring power to Indians by June 1948. This announcement was crucial because it opened up the possibility of either partitioning India into separate states or forming multiple states, depending on how Indian leaders negotiated and resolved their differences. Importantly, the British also stated that their authority over the princely states would end with the transfer of power, and these states would not be handed over to any new Indian government. This offer of a definite and relatively quick transfer of power was compelling for Indian leaders, who were grappling with widespread communal riots and unrest. The British government replaced Lord Wavell with Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy, accelerating the partitioning of India and paving the way for independence. The decisions made during these months set the stage for the formation of India and Pakistan, fundamentally changing the political environment of the subcontinent.



## Keywords

Mountbatten Plan, Indian Independence Act, Integration of Indian States, Constitution of India

## Discussion

### 4.4.1 The Mountbatten Plan and Indian Independence Act

#### ◆ Mountbatten's role and perceptions

Mountbatten is often idealised as a decisive leader who swiftly resolved India's independence issues, as portrayed in *Freedom at Midnight* by Collins and Lapierre. However, this perspective overlooks the fact that he was granted significantly more authority by the British government than his predecessors. His rapid decision-making was largely influenced by the British government's urgent desire to exit India quickly to prevent extended military conflict or further suppression of the population.

#### ◆ The British Government's Decision

The British government was under severe pressure to end its rule in India quickly. According to Cripps, the only alternative option besides a hasty departure would have been to use extensive force, which was both politically impractical and likely to have led to strong resistance from the Indian population. The idea of complete withdrawal by March 1948 was already suggested by Wavell, the former Viceroy, in September 1946. Mountbatten's role was primarily to implement this decision quickly, but this rush caused many unresolved issues, like the violence that happened in Punjab.

#### ◆ The plan for Independence

Mountbatten initially proposed a plan, known as 'Plan Balkan', for transferring power to separate provinces or confederations, with Bengal and Punjab given the option to vote for partition. However, this plan was quickly rejected after strong opposition from Nehru. Instead, the suggestion by V.P. Menon and Patel for an immediate transfer of power to two central governments (India and Pakistan) was adopted. This plan granted both countries Dominion Status, meaning they could govern themselves but were still part of the British Commonwealth, with the right to fully break away later (right of secession). This proposal was accepted by the Congress, the Muslim League, and Sikh leaders,





leading to the Indian Independence Act of July 1947 and the transfer of power on 15 August 1947.

◆ *Nehru's Opposition*

Mountbatten's decision to abandon 'Plan Balkan' after Jawaharlal Nehru's opposition shows the strong position of the Congress during the final stages of British rule in India. Nehru was against the idea of breaking India into smaller states. He was concerned that such fragmentation would weaken India and create instability. However, the alternative plan also had its limitations as it ruled out the possibility of some non-communal, unified states, such as an independent Bengal or a free Pathan state. The decision to let provincial assemblies choose whether they wanted to join India or Pakistan prevented these options and led to discontent in certain regions.

◆ *Case of Independent Pathan State*

In the North-West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P.), there were demands for an independent Pathan state, but these were ignored. Instead, a referendum (a vote by the people) was held, and the province chose to join Pakistan. The Congress leadership, despite having a majority in the N.W.F.P. assembly, did not push for a plebiscite that included the option of an independent Pathan state or ensured that all adults could vote (Universal Franchise). This led to accusations of betrayal among some leaders in the region, like Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who had hoped for more support from the Congress.

#### 4.4.2 Integration of Indian States

◆ *The Princely states and the transfer of power*

As the British prepared to leave India, the future of the princely states became a major concern. Many rulers, particularly those in Hyderabad, Bhopal, and Travancore, wanted to remain independent and were supported by some British officials. However, the rise of popular movements demanding political rights and representation in the Constituent Assembly created pressure on these rulers to make changes. The Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, used these popular movements to push the princes into joining India while also keeping the movements under control when needed.

In 1946-47, the Congress, under the leadership of Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon, integrated the princely states into the Indian Union through negotiations and pressure tactics. This process occurred in two phases. The Initial Accession took place on 15 August 1947. During this phase, most princely states, except Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad,

◆ *Congress strategy and negotiations*

signed the Instrument of Accession. By signing this document, the princes agreed to let the central government handle important areas like defence, foreign affairs, and communications. This was relatively simple because these were powers the princes had never fully controlled. Another phase was Full Integration, which occurred between 1947 and 1948. This phase involved merging the princely states into neighbouring provinces or forming new administrative units like Kathiawar Union, Vindhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Himachal Pradesh. To achieve this, the Congress used a combination of incentives and pressures. Princes were offered incentives like privy purses (a fixed sum of money) and positions as Governors. However, the Congress also applied pressure, including supporting popular protests and, in some cases, using military action.

◆ *Challenges and methods*

Some princely states posed challenges during this process. In Hyderabad, the Nizam faced internal conflicts, including the Telangana armed struggle. Sardar Patel and V.P. Menon used military action to integrate Hyderabad into India. Junagadh ruler attempted to join Pakistan, but Indian police action and popular protests led to its integration into India. The Congress also launched the 'Mysore Chalo' agitation, which resulted in political reforms in the state. In Travancore, Dewan C.P. Ramaswami Iyer's ambitions were curtailed by political pressure and the Communist uprising.

◆ *Partition and boundary demarcation*

Meanwhile, as British rule in India came to an end, the Mountbatten Plan was rapidly implemented. It led to the formal division of Bengal and Punjab. Minority members in Bengal and Punjab assemblies voted for partition, which resulted in the creation of Pakistan and the drawing of new boundaries. The Boundary Commissions, led by British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe, were criticised for their lack of local knowledge, leading to contentious and sometimes arbitrary borders. However, protests over the boundary decisions were largely muted due to the urgent need to transfer power.

◆ *Mountbatten's role*

Mountbatten, who became the Governor-General of India, had a crucial role in overseeing the transfer of power. His decisions were vital, although some critics argue that he acted more out of practicality than solving the issues of partition.

◆ *Reflections on Independence*

When India gained independence on August 15, 1947, the moment was bittersweet. It was filled with mixed emotions and a sense of dissatisfaction for many. For countless Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan, independence came with



the harsh realities of partition. They faced a difficult choice between enduring violence and economic hardship or fleeing as refugees, leaving behind their homes and histories.

◆ *Post August 15*

Despite these challenges, the period after August 15 saw significant achievements. Under Nehru's leadership, India strategically pursued a non-aligned stance, a foreign policy independent of British or American influence. This decision was not only significant but also a testament to India's sovereignty and global influence. A democratic constitution was adopted in 1950, and the country made strides in public sector and food production. Although reforms like land ceilings were poorly implemented, the linguistic reorganisation of states in 1956 and other achievements reflected the struggles and aspirations of the people rather than the automatic outcomes of independence. However, the broader capitalist development path chosen by the dominant leadership largely reflected the economic interests of the bourgeoisie.

### 4.4.3 Framing of the Constitution

◆ *Adoption of Constitution*

The Constitution of India officially came into force on January 26, 1950, which is now celebrated every year as Republic Day. The Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution earlier, on November 26, 1949. However, it didn't become operative until January 26, 1950. Before 1950, January 26 was observed as Independence Day, representing the day when many Indians pledged their commitment to achieving complete independence from British rule. The Constitution is the product of extensive deliberations by the Constituent Assembly. In this section, let us explore the making of the Indian Constitution.

◆ *Evolution of the Indian Constitution (1858-1935)*

While the Constitution was adopted on November 26, 1949, some parts of it related to citizenship, elections, and the provisional Parliament came into effect immediately. The Constitution ensures basic democratic rights to everyone in the country, including non-citizens. It also establishes the institutions for legislation, execution, and jurisdiction to protect these rights. The Constitution was designed to promote social change and strengthen democracy in India. The journey to create the Indian Constitution started long before it was officially adopted. During the colonial period, some democratic features were introduced, but they mainly served the interests of the British rather than the Indian people. The development of India's Constitution was deeply

rooted in the country's struggle for independence and the effort to establish a responsible government. This evolution involved more than just drafting resolutions or proposals; it was shaped by the practical application of political ideas such as parliamentary democracy, republicanism, and civil liberties.

◆ *Influential legislative acts (1858-1935)*

The Indian Constitution, while finalised by the Constituent Assembly, incorporates ideas and features from earlier legislative acts that date back to 1858 and continued until 1935. These acts, in response to protests and revolts against British rule, were designed to adapt colonial governance to changing circumstances. Some of the most significant acts include the Government of India Acts of 1858, 1919, and 1935, the Council of India Acts of 1861 and 1892, and the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. These acts introduced important concepts like representative democracy, decentralisation of power, minority rights, and provincial autonomy, which later became crucial elements of the Indian Constitution.

◆ *Congress Influence*

The Indian National Congress played a crucial role in shaping India's democratic framework. By 1920, under Mahatma Gandhi's influence, the Congress was organised in a way that reflected the principles of a parliamentary system, with elected leaders and committees. This structure was similar to the parliamentary form of government that India would later adopt in its Constitution in 1950.

◆ *1937 Provincial Assembly elections*

The Congress opposed the Government of India Act of 1919 and launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. It led to the appointment of the Simon Commission to review the Act. Although the Congress boycotted the Simon Commission, some groups made representations, leading to the Simon Commission Report of 1930. The British government discussed this report during the Round Table Conferences but later issued the 'Communal Award' in 1932, which emphasised divisions between Hindus and Muslims. This was followed by the Government of India Act of 1935, which provided separate representation for different communities and led to provincial assembly elections in 1937, where the Congress won and formed governments in many provinces.

In the 1920s, there were growing calls for a constitution made by Indians themselves. The Nehru Report of 1928 argued for universal adult suffrage and responsible government but still supported Dominion Status rather than full independence (Purna Swaraj). This disappointed the



- ◆ *Demand for self-governance*
- ◆ *A constitution written by Indians*

younger members of the Congress. By 1934, the Congress officially demanded an Indian Constitution free from any external influence. After the failure of the Statutory Commission and the Round Table Conferences, and during the ongoing Non-Cooperation Movement, the Congress, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, demanded the creation of a Constituent Assembly in 1938. This demand was strongly reiterated in 1939, emphasising the need for self-governance and a constitution written by Indians.

#### 4.4.3.1 The Constituent Assembly

- ◆ *Cripps Mission proposals*

Initially, the British colonial authorities resisted the demand for an Indian Constitution. However, World War II and the formation of a new coalition government in Britain necessitated addressing the constitutional issue. In 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India with draft proposals for a post-war constitution, provided the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Muslim League agreed. The proposals included Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth, a united India with an elected Constituent Assembly. Provinces that did not accept the Constitution could opt for separate arrangements. Both the INC and the Muslim League rejected these proposals. The Muslim League insisted on a divided India with a separate state of Pakistan and two Constituent Assemblies.

- ◆ *Cabinet Mission proposals*

The British government continued attempts to reconcile the INC and the Muslim League, sending a Cabinet Delegation consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps, and Mr. A.V. Alexander in 1946. The delegation failed to secure an agreement but proposed a Union of India with jurisdiction over foreign affairs, defence, and communication, while provinces retained residuary powers. The Union's Executive and Legislature would include provincial and state representatives, with special provisions for communal issues. Provinces could form groups with their executives and legislatures.

- ◆ *Constituent Assembly elections*

Following the Cabinet Mission's proposals, elections were held for the Constituent Assembly, with members elected by Provincial Legislative Assemblies. Differences between the INC and the Muslim League regarding the 'Group Clauses' led to British intervention, supporting the Muslim League's interpretation. On December 6, 1946, the British Government acknowledged the possibility of two Constituent Assemblies and two states. As a result, the Constituent Assembly met on December 9, 1946, without Muslim League participation, as they boycotted the meeting.



◆ *Representation  
in the Constituent  
Assembly*

It is often argued that the Constituent Assembly of India did not represent the masses because its members were not elected through a universal adult franchise. Instead, they were indirectly elected by a restricted franchise limited to the elite sections of society, including the educated and taxpayers. According to Austin, the restricted franchise and indirect elections were stipulated by the Cabinet Mission Plan to expedite the Constitution-making process. Despite this, the Assembly represented diverse opinions and religious communities. The Congress, which held a majority, maintained a policy of including various minority communities and viewpoints. The Assembly included members from different ideological backgrounds and religious groups, such as Sikhs, Muslims, and the general category (Hindus and other communities like Anglo-Indians and Parsis). Important non-Congress members included Dr. Ambedkar and S.P. Mukherjee.

◆ *Universal  
values*

The Assembly sought to address the concerns of all social and cultural groups. Dr. Ambedkar was initially elected from Bengal but, following the partition was re-elected by the Bombay Congress at the request of the Congress High Command. Despite the restricted franchise, the Assembly aimed to incorporate universal democratic values. It adopted provisions from various Constitutions worldwide, adapting them to India's needs.

◆ *Drafting  
process*

Important figures in the Assembly included Prasad, Asad, Patel, Nehru, Pant, Sitaramayya, Ayyar, Ayyangar, Ambedkar, and Satyanarayan Sinha. These individuals had influential roles, often serving in multiple capacities across the Constituent Assembly, the Congress Party, and the interim government. Nehru, Patel, Prasad, and Asad were particularly dominant, enjoying high prestige and influencing the Assembly's proceedings. The Constitution Drafting Committee, led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, meticulously incorporated the Assembly's decisions into the draft Constitution. T.T. Krishnamachari points out Ambedkar's crucial role, acknowledging his significant contribution to the drafting of the Constitution.

◆ *Inaugural  
session*

The Constituent Assembly of India held its inaugural session on December 9, 1946. Out of 296 members, only 207 attended due to the Muslim League's boycott. Initially, J.B. Kripalani requested Dr. Sachchidanand to chair the meeting temporarily. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as the permanent Chairman on December 11, 1946. Jawaharlal



Nehru introduced a resolution regarding the Assembly's Aims and Objectives on December 13, 1946.

To ensure smooth functioning, the Constituent Assembly divided its work among several committees:

- Union Power Committee: Chaired by Jawaharlal Nehru, consisting of nine members.
- Committee on Fundamental Rights and Minorities: Chaired by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, with 54 members.
- Steering Committee: Consisting of Dr. K.M. Munshi (chairman), Gopalaswami Iyengar, and Bhagwan Das.
- Provincial Constitution Committee: Also chaired by Sardar Patel, with 25 members.
- Committee on Union Constitution: Chaired by Jawaharlal Nehru, with 15 members.

On August 29, 1947, the Assembly appointed a Drafting Committee led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Sir B.N. Rau, Advisor to the Constituent Assembly, prepared the draft Constitution. A seven-member committee reviewed the draft. The draft was presented by Dr. Ambedkar and published in February 1948. The Assembly debated the draft clause by clause (second reading) until October 17, 1949. Further discussions and the final reading occurred on November 14, 1949, with the Constitution being finalised and signed on November 26, 1949. The Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950.

♦ *Drafting*

The foundation principles of the Indian Constitution are liberal democracy and secularism, with elements of social democracy. It aims to protect individual rights and the cultural and religious rights of communities. These principles were articulated through the Objective Resolution and the Preamble.

♦ *Foundational principles*

### **Objective Resolution**

On December 13, 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru presented the Objective Resolution, outlining the aims and objectives of the Constituent Assembly:

1. Proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic and draft a Constitution.
2. India would be a Union of British India, Indian States, and other willing territories.
3. The Union would grant autonomy to its units, retaining residual powers.

4. All authority in India is derived from the people.
5. Guarantee justice, equality, and freedom for all citizens.
6. Provide safeguards for minorities, backward areas, and depressed classes.
7. Maintain territorial integrity and sovereign rights.
8. Contribute to global peace and welfare.

◆ *Sovereignty,  
justice, equality,  
global contribution*

Dr. Ambedkar's address on the Objective Resolution was significant. Despite some opposition and delays, the discussion on the resolution proceeded after the influential speeches of Dr Rajendra Prasad.

### **Preamble**

The Preamble of the Constitution, adopted on November 26, 1949, reads:

"We the People of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:

- Justice, Social, Economic and Political;
- Liberty of thought, expression belief, faith and worship;
- Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all
- Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; In Our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do Hereby Adopt, Enact and Give to Ourselves this Constitution."

### **4.4.3.2 Features of the Indian Constitution**

The Indian Constitution is notable for its unique blend of features borrowed from various constitutions worldwide. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pointed out its comprehensive nature, stating it was prepared "after ransacking all the known Constitutions of the world." Major influences include:

- Fundamental Rights: Based on the American Constitution.
- Parliamentary System: Adapted from the British Constitution.
- Directive Principles of State Policy: Inspired by the



Irish Constitution.

- Emergency Provisions: Derived from the German Reich Constitution and the Government of India Act, 1935.

Despite these influences, the features were modified to suit India's specific needs. The Constitution is the longest-written constitution in the world, originally consisting of 395 Articles and 8 Schedules. It contains both Justiciable and Non-Justiciable Rights.

### **Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy**

#### ♦ **Fundamental Rights:**

- Right to Equality
- Right to Freedom
- Right against Exploitation
- Right to Freedom of Religion
- Cultural and Educational Rights
- Right to Property
- Right to Constitutional Remedies

- ♦ The inclusion of Fundamental Rights was inspired by various resolutions from the Indian National Congress, such as Annie Besant's draft Commonwealth of India Bill, Nehru Report, Karachi Resolution, and Sapru Report of 1945. The Sapru Report was significant for distinguishing between justiciable Fundamental Rights and non-justiciable Directive Principles. The Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights aimed to make these rights justifiable while also considering state intervention for social reform. Important debates included the exclusion of anti-social practices under religious freedoms and the substitution of "equality before the law" with "equal protection of law" to prevent discrimination.
- ♦ Directive Principles of State Policy guide the state in introducing social reforms and ensuring social justice. They are non-justiciable but essential for directing government policy.

### **Universal Adult Suffrage and Abolition of Separate Electorate**

#### ♦ *Universal Adult Suffrage*

While the sub-committee on Fundamental Rights did not include universal suffrage as a Fundamental Right, it was embedded in Article 326 of the Constitution under Part XV

(Elections). Though the term “universal” is not explicitly mentioned, the practice of granting voting rights to every adult citizen aligns with the universal adult franchise.

♦ *Abolition of Separate Electorate*

Prior to independence, separate electorates were introduced for various communities through reforms such as the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the Communal Award of 1932. The Poona Pact, resulting from Gandhi’s fast negotiations with Dr Ambedkar, led to the reservation of seats for depressed classes in general constituencies, thereby abolishing separate electorates.

♦ *Debate*

The Indian Constitution provides a comprehensive framework for a democratic and parliamentary government. It includes Fundamental Rights, which protect individuals from state encroachments, and Directive Principles, which guide the state in introducing reforms to enhance these rights. The decision to adopt a parliamentary system over a decentralised, panchayat-based system was debated, with some Gandhians advocating for the latter. Ultimately, the centralised parliamentary system was chosen. This decision was influenced by the desire to form a democratic constitution with a socialist bias, allowing future adaptation based on the needs of the nation.

### Timeline

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1947 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clement Attlee’s Declaration</li> <li>• Mountbatten Plan</li> <li>• India Independence Act</li> <li>• Transfer of Power</li> </ul>                                                                                                   |
| 1948 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.</li> <li>• Indian Army takes control of Hyderabad and integrates it into the Indian Union</li> </ul>                                                                                                |
| 1949 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of New Constitution</li> <li>• The new Constitution takes effect</li> <li>• Formal establishment of the Indian Republic</li> <li>• Communal Violence and Migration in Bengal</li> <li>• Delhi Pact on Minorities</li> </ul> |



## Summarised Overview

Mountbatten's role in India's partition has been both praised and criticised. While he was instrumental in speeding up the process of transfer of power, the methods and decisions taken under his leadership had lasting consequences. His plans, including Plan Balkan, were ultimately abandoned, and the final approach led to significant issues and criticisms, particularly regarding the handling of regional and communal conflicts.

The integration of princely states and the partition of India was marked by a combination of negotiation, pressure, and rapid decision-making. While Patel and V.P. Menon's efforts were crucial in integrating the states, the process was complicated by communal tensions, political manoeuvring, and the rush to meet deadlines. The integration of princely states was a significant achievement, but it also involved complex challenges and controversies that shaped the early years of independent India.

The making of the Indian Constitution unfolded in two key phases. The first phase (1857-1935) involved the British colonial administration introducing various governance reforms, including measures for Indian representation. However, these reforms, such as the Morley-Minto Reforms and the Communal Award, primarily served colonial interests rather than genuine democratic inclusion. The provisions for communal representation, particularly for the Depressed Classes, faced opposition from Indian leaders. Gandhi's fast led to the Poona Pact, which abolished separate electorates but introduced reserved seats for Depressed Classes in provincial legislatures.

The second phase (1946-1949) marked the establishment of the Constituent Assembly following the Cabinet Mission Plan, which was elected through a restricted adult franchise by provincial assemblies. Despite this limitation, the Assembly was diverse and represented various opinions, ideologies, and social groups. It engaged in extensive deliberations before finalising the Constitution. Adopted in 1949 and effective from January 26, 1950, the Indian Constitution embodies principles of liberal democracy and secularism with elements of social democracy. It guarantees justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for individuals and cultural and religious rights for communities, reflecting a vision for social change and inclusive governance.

## Assignments

1. Discuss the role of Lord Mountbatten in India's Independence.
2. Write a note on the integration of Indian states.
3. Examine the role of the Constituent Assembly in the making of the Indian Constitution.
4. Analyse the key provisions of the Nehru Report.
5. Discuss the major features and important provisions of the Indian Constitution.

## Suggested Reading

1. Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 13, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1994,
2. Chandra.Bipan. *Indian National Movement: The Long-Term Dynamics*, New Delhi, 2008.
3. Chandra. Bipan. et al. *Indian Since Independence*, Penguin Random House India. 2008.
4. Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012.
5. Menon, V. P. *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States*. Orient Blackswan. 2014.

## Reference

1. Bandhopadhyay. Sekhar. *From Plassey to Partition and After*. Orient Blackswan Private Limited. New Delhi, 2014.
2. Chandra. Bipan. et al. *India's Struggle for Independence*. Penguin India. 2017.
3. Sarkar. Sumit. *Modern India 1885-1947*. Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983.



## Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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# SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: .....

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## THIRD SEMESTER M.A. HISTORY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - M21HS09DC  
COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN MODERN INDIA  
(CBCS - PG)  
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

### SECTION A

Answer any **ten** questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries **one** mark.

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Who introduced the Permanent Revenue Settlement in 1793?
2. Who is regarded as the father of the Indian Renaissance?
3. How many High Courts were established under the Indian High Courts Act of 1861?
4. In which work did Dadabhai Naoroji discuss the concept of the 'drain of wealth'?
5. In which book was the poem "Vande Mataram" first published?
6. Who wrote *The History of British India*?
7. In which year was the Indian National Congress formed?
8. Name the two publications started by Annie Besant.
9. Which organisation did Gandhiji establish to unite the Indian community in South Africa?
10. Who was the British General responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre?
11. Which mass movement began with the 'Dandi March' of Mahatma Gandhi?



12. Who was the first president of the AITUC?
13. When was the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) founded?
14. Who represented the Congress in the Second Round Table Conference?
15. What was the slogan associated with the Quit India Movement?

### SECTION B

*Answer any five questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries two marks.*

**(5X2 =10 Marks)**

16. Pitt's India Act of 1784
17. Mahalwari settlement
18. Bhils revolt
19. Doctrine of Lapse
20. Komagata Maru Incident
21. Partition of Bengal
22. Rowlatt Act
23. Simon Commission
24. All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)
25. Chittagong Armoury Raid

### SECTION C

*Answer any five questions in one paragraph. Each question carries four marks.*

**(5X4 = 20 Marks)**

26. Examine the objectives of the Swarajist Party.
27. Discuss the effectiveness of Gandhian techniques of struggle in the Indian Independence movement.
28. Analyse the significance of the Khilafat movement in the Indian National movement.
29. Explain the nature of the Sanyasi Revolt.
30. Write a note on the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre.
31. Trace the impact of the Second World War on Indian Nationalism.
32. Analyse the role of the Ghadar Party in the Indian Independence movement.
33. Examine the consequences of the Partition of Bengal on the Indian Nationalist movement.



## SECTION D

*Answer any **three** questions in two pages. Each question carries **ten** marks.*

**(3X10 =30 Marks)**

34. Examine the role of revolutionaries in the struggle for Indian Independence.
35. Assess the role played by Mahatma Gandhi in the Indian freedom struggle.
36. Discuss the nature and consequences of the Revolt of 1857.
37. Analyse the socio-economic impact of British rule in India.
38. Examine the role of colonial modernity in the emergence of Indian Nationalism.
39. Evaluate the impact of the Quit India Movement on the Indian Independence struggle.





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DISCIPLINE CORE - M21HS09DC  
COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM IN MODERN INDIA  
(CBCS - PG)  
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

### SECTION A

Answer any **ten** questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries **one** mark.

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Who proposed the theory of the 'Drain of Wealth'?
2. Which land revenue system was introduced by the British in Bengal in 1793?
3. Who was the Governor-General of India during the 1857 revolt?
4. Which European power was the first to arrive in India for trade?
5. Who were the two main leaders associated with the Home Rule League?
6. In which year was the Lucknow Pact signed?
7. What was the movement against the partition of Bengal called?
8. In which year was the partition of Bengal annulled?
9. Who was the British official responsible for the Amritsar Tragedy?
10. What was the slogan adopted at the Lahore Session of 1929?
11. Who were the leaders of the Khilafat Movement in India?
12. Which act was passed by the British after the Third Round Table Conference?
13. Which Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) leaders were involved in the Lahore Conspiracy Case?



14. Who represented the Indian National Congress in the Second Round Table Conference?
15. What was the slogan associated with the Quit India Movement?

### SECTION B

*Answer any **five** questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries **two** marks.*

**(5X2 =10 Marks)**

16. Battle of Plassey
17. Permanent Revenue Settlement
18. Drain of Wealth
19. Surat Split
20. Lucknow Pact
21. Ilbert Bill Controversy
22. Nehru Report
23. Swaraj Party
24. RIN Mutiny
25. Government of India Act of 1935

### SECTION C

*Answer any **five** questions in one paragraph. Each question carries **four** marks.*

**(5X4 = 20 Marks)**

26. Discuss the objectives and methods of the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Civil Disobedience Movement.
27. Examine the role of revolutionaries in the struggle for Indian Independence.
28. Mention the factors that contributed to the emergence of Nationalism in India.
29. Discuss the causes and impact of Rowlatt Satyagraha.
30. Describe the methods and goals of Gandhi in his early Satyagrahas in India.
31. Discuss the commercialisation of agriculture and its consequences on Indian peasants.
32. How did the Simon Commission contribute to the growing demand for complete Independence in India?
33. Evaluate how the First World War influenced Indian nationalism and shaped the subsequent political scenario in India



## SECTION D

Answer any **three** questions in two pages. Each question carries **ten** marks.

**(3X10 =30 Marks)**

34. Analyse the key factors that led to the Partition of India in 1947. How did political, social, and economic circumstances influence this decision?
35. Discuss the debate on deindustrialisation in India under British colonial rule, focusing on the causes and consequences for indigenous crafts and industries.
36. Examine the nature of the 1857 revolt and discuss the historiographical debate associated with it.
37. Examine Mahatma Gandhi's role in leading the Civil Disobedience Movement in India and analyse the importance of the Salt Satyagraha in the Indian National Movement.
38. Discuss the emergence of the Indian National Congress, highlighting the various theories regarding its foundation and the role of early political associations.
39. Evaluate the impact of the Quit India Movement on the Indian Independence struggle.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യായാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം  
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം  
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കുതിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ  
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സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം  
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം  
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം  
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ  
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

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# Colonialism and Nationalism in Modern India

COURSE CODE: M21HS09DC

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