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MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

TEXT AND CONTEXT



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Bidyut Chakrabarty
Rajendra Kumar Pandey

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Preface

Indian political thought constitutes one of the most significant components of undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum in political science and modern Indian history in almost all the universities in India. However, the majority of writings on the subject by Indian authors appear to suffer from a fundamental flaw in the sense that these writings are shorn of a context-driven conceptualisation of the major strands of the thoughts of the thinkers. The present work, therefore, seeks to articulate the main currents of modern Indian political thought in an unconventional way of locating the texts and themes of the thinkers within the socio-economic and politico-cultural contexts in which such ideas were conceptualised and articulated. Moreover, the book also tries to analytically grasp the influences of various British constitutional devices that appeared as the responses of the colonial government to redress the genuine socio-economic grievances of various sections of the Indian society. Thus, the book happens to be unique in the sense that it breaks new grounds in not only articulating the main currents of modern Indian political thought, in an analytically more sound approach of context-driven discussion, but also provokes new researches in the field by chartering a new course in grasping and articulating the political thought in India.

In writing the book, a number of people have, directly and indirectly, contributed, to whom we remain indebted. It is indeed a matter of pride for us to steer the SAGE Text Book project further with this tract. We are thankful to SAGE management for bestowing this honour on us. In fact, it was the personal care and interest of Dr Sugata Ghosh, Vice President, Commissioning, SAGE, and the constant prodding of his team of able and efficient editors who got the work finally done, despite a number of hiccups right from the very beginning. We feel dutybound to express our gratitude to them.

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We are thankful to the anonymous referees of the manuscripts whose suggestions were quite insightful and helped in revising the contents of the volume. We are also indebted to our students whose critical queries in the classroom proved to be valuable inputs in arranging the texts and contexts of the various thinkers. If they find the book useful and intellectually provocative, we will have achieved what we are looking for.

Finally, we fondly acknowledge the unflinching support and contribution of our families without which it would not have been possible for us to concentrate on our academic pursuits of which the latest product comes in the form of the present book.

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Introduction[1]

There are broadly two specific ways in which social and political thought in India can be conceptualised. On the one hand, there is a relatively easier way of articulating the thought in a chronological format. This is a format in which the ideas are explained in a sequence underplaying the importance of the context in defining the ideas in a particular mould. Those supporting this type of conceptualisation tend to focus more on the ideas per se and less on what lay behind them. Although it is a useful exercise, its academic utility seems to be limited for two reasons: (*a*) by following a purely descriptive mode, this exercise does not allow us to go beyond what is visible on the surface, and (*b*) the narrative mode is theoretically restraining because it fails to explain the moments when new ideas emerge as hegemonic, replacing those ideas which lost their explanatory capabilities.

In contrast to this, there exists, on the other hand, another mode whereby ideas are articulated as part of complex socio-economic and political processes that remain at the root of their construction and evolution. Social and political thought, as per this conceptualisation, is organically linked with the interplay of factors involving society, economy and politics. What is significant in this mode is the critical importance of the milieu in which ideas get articulated. Especially in a colonial dispensation, the importance of the context is obvious, for not only does it distort the natural evolution of a society, it also seeks to swallow the prevalent oppositional ideas, presumably because of their very nature. In such an explanatory mode, the complexity of the evolution of social and political thought is evident and clearly spelt out. The purpose of this long introduction is not merely to document the political ideas of those thinkers who changed the course of India's freedom struggle, but also to analyse the socio-historical contexts in which these ideas evolved and also the socio-political changes that these ideas aimed at.

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Given the dialectical interaction between ideas and their context, it provides a persuasive theoretical format that is relative to the circumstances. Opposed to the foundational views of social and political thought, this is an approach giving space to the search for alternatives within a framework that adequately underlines the organic nature of ideas. Located within fluid socio-economic and political processes, ideas are always in constant flux and, hence, their fluid nature. Such a theoretical postulate allows us to both articulate and conceptualise social and political thought in the context of colonialism or any other value system with no organic link with the prevalent society.

Since the book is about modern Indian political thought, its obvious focus is on ideas that critically influenced the articulation of nationalism in India. Even before nationalism emerged as a decisive ideology, there was a long tradition of political thought which provided specific perspectives in which several thinkers interpreted their views and ideas. This is not the right place to deal with pre-modern political thought, though a discussion of major perspectives in which political ideas were articulated in the past is perfectly in order. Broadly speaking, Kautilya and Barani, representing two different periods of Indian socio-political life, are two major thinkers who not only put forward their views most systematically, but also set the ideological tone of the period in which they articulated their lived experience. Hence, we will concentrate on the contribution of Kautilya and Barani primarily to grasp the perspectives in which they conceptualised major socio-political issues of the period by critically engaging with the prevalent historical context.

KAUTILYA

In the ancient Indian political thought, the contribution of Kautilya appears significant for at least two reasons. First, the comprehensiveness and analytical precision of his ideas on the subjects as diverse as origin of state, the nature of state, the concepts of *dharma* and *danda*, interstate relations and diplomacy, the ideas of decentralisation, welfare state and public opinion, and so on are so profound that they seem axiomatic to explain the idea of political thought in ancient India. Second, as a result, Kautilya

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and his *Arthashastra* are ordinarily reckoned as the representative thinker and the text, respectively, to delineate the broad contours of political and administrative system prevailing in the ancient times. So all-encompassing seems to be the scope of the *Arthashastra* that it contains vivid commentary on subjects like economics, ethics, sociology, intelligence, espionage, warfare, criminology, education, and so on. Yet, the science of politics and statecraft remains the running theme of the treatise. Accepting monarchy as the most suitable form of governance, Kautilya provides a deep analysis of the basic issues of statecraft like organisation of the state, qualities of the ideal ruler, ethical and moral foundations of the society, norms of practical politics, problems of war and diplomacy, and various aspects of an efficient and effective administration.

Kautilya's theory of state stands out prominently as one of the theoretical postulates propounded in ancient times but carry some amount of veracity even in modern times. Explaining the origin of state as patently man-made, he noted that the original state of nature was marked by the existence of *matsyanyaya* or 'the law of the fish' whereby the bigger fish swallows the smaller fish. This situation was overcome by people by anointing Manu, the son of Vivasvat, as the king. Thus, it seems obvious that as far as the system of governance was concerned, Kautilya preferred the system of monarchy in comparison to other forms of governance such as *dvairajya* (joint rule by males of the same family over the whole kingdom), *vairajya* (rule by a foreign ruler by occupation), and so on, the mention of which were made by Kautilya in the *Arthashastra*. Nevertheless, given the supreme position of the king in the state, Kautilya emphasised on certain innate qualities of the king including his training in philosophy, economic sciences and *dandaniti* or political science (Kangle 1972: Book I, Chapter 6).

A key aspect of the Kautilyan theory of state is considered to be the *saptang* (seven organs) theory. Consisting of the seven vital organs, that is, the *swami* (the ruler), the *amatya* (the minister), the *janapada* (the territory with people settled on it), the *durga* (the fortified capital), the *kosha* (the treasury), the *danda* (the army) and the *mitra* (the ally or friend), the *saptang* theory seeks to define the state as an organic entity rooted in the seven elements. The nature of state which emerges from an analysis of the *saptang* theory seems to be enmeshed in the characteristics of a strong monarchy with stable

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and systematic administration. Though references have been made to the elements of people and territory through the overbearing concept of the *janapada*, Kautilya appears to be laying more stress on the structural dimensions of state by detailing the elements of the *durga*, the *kosha* and the *danda* so profoundly. Interestingly, the inclusion of *mitra* as an inalienable element of state provides a holistic perspective to his theory of state, for it portrays the state not only as a sovereign entity in itself, it also recognises the existence of the state as a member of the comity of nations having interactions with each other, thereby ordaining the polity a distinct characteristic of pluralistically dominated monism (Krishna Rao 1958: 64).

In proper operationalisation of his theory of state, Kautilya banks heavily upon the twin concepts of *dharma* and *danda*. Explaining *dharma* as some sort of social duty involving obedience to the customary and sacred laws, Kautilya seems to visualise two-fold functions of *dharma*. First, while advocating a strong monarchy, he never allowed the king to become absolute and the restraining factor was supposed to be *dharma*. In other words, though the king was supreme in his state, he was not above *dharma.* Second, the social conduct of the citizens of the state is also supposed to be regulated and restrained by the dynamics of *dharma.* Thus, *dharma* happens to be some sort of amorphous and supreme law of the land in ancient times within the norms of which everyone in the state, including the king, has to live his life and discharge his stipulated responsibilities. Kautilya maintains that in order to have the proper functioning of *dharma* in society, the unmistakable role of *danda* should not be ignored. Conceptually, *danda*, in ancient Indian political traditions, is understood in the sense of coercion or punishment. Standing out as the prime instrument of discipline in society, *danda* was supposed to ingrain in the personality of the king the very right to punish a citizen if the latter is found to be acting in gross violation of the laid down norms of the state, which were fundamentally determined by the sacred and customary laws of the state. Thus, in the formulations of Kautilya, disciplining an aberrant citizen appeared to be an important duty of the king, as the failure in doing so would have resulted in unnecessary disturbances and miseries for the otherwise peaceful and happy life of the citizens of the state. And *danda* was supposed to be the legitimate instrumentality to bring out order and discipline in the state.

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Another important subject finding a place of prominence in the *Arthashastra* is the idea of interstate relations and diplomacy. In the ancient Indian literary works, the whole idea of interstate relations was sought to be conceptualised through the notion of the *mandala* (circles). Hence, Kautilya also attempted to explain the dynamics of interstate relations in ancient times through his *mandala* theory. The essence of the theory lies in delineating the position of a kingdom as an ally or enemy vis-à-vis the intending conqueror with respect to its spatial placement in the *mandala.* Taking the *vijigishu* (the conqueror or the ambitious king) as the reference point of the *mandala* theory, Kautilya explains the theory in terms of four basic circles. For instance, in the first circle, the *vijigishu*, his friend and his friend's friend exist as the three primary kings forming a circle of states and each possessing the five elements of sovereignty such as the *amatya*, the *janapada*, the *durga*, the *kosha* and the *danda.* Consequently, a circle of states comprises of 18 elements. This analogy applies to the other three circles of states having the *ari* (enemy of the *vijigishu*), the *madhyama* (the indifferent king) and the *udasina* (the neutral king) kings forming the core of each of the three circles. In final reckoning, therefore, the *mandala* theory consists of four primary circles of states, 12 kings, 60 elements of sovereignty and 72 elements of states, drawing on the texture of the four circles.

In the realm of interstate relations, apart from the *mandala* theory, Kautilya also elaborates upon what he calls as the *upaya*s (peace politics) and the *shadgunya*s (six war tactics). These are supposed to be the operational tips to the conqueror to conduct his interstate relations in times of peace and war. Besides, Kautilya puts forward a detailed system of diplomatic relations amongst the states and insists upon a sound espionage system to be maintained by the king in order to remain immune from any internal or external threat to his life and state.

In final analysis, it comes out that Kautilya is rightly reckoned by various scholars and commentators as the true representative to describe and explain the form and nature of state and society as existing in the *Maurayan* times. The *Arthashastra*, therefore, not only turns out to be the authentic source of information regarding the state of things in the ancient times, but its coverage and the depth of analysis of various aspects of life have been so profound that most,

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if not all, of the dimensions of the socio-economic and politico-administrative systems of the ancient times may be discerned from the text of the *Arthashastra.* Moreover, many of the ideas presented and analysed by Kautilya in the *Arthashastra* hold good even today in most of the domains which constitute the bedrock of the modern life.

BARANI

The medieval period represented a distinct phase in the history of the political thought in India owing to the introduction of new aspects in the socio-economic and politico-administrative lives of the people with the arrival of the Muslim rulers in the country. Quite evidently, the unique feature of Islamic way of life, as it existed in the medieval times, was the belief in the universality of the law of the Quran as drawn from the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad. Consequently, the *Shariat*, based on the precepts of the Quran, was taken as the final authority on the very existence of life and the *raison d'être* of the state and the government was to serve the purposes of *Shariat*. Hence, the typicality of the political thought rooted in such a singular view of life was bound to be articulated by the chroniclers and the historians of the time. In this regard, taken as the representative thinker of the medieval times, the contribution of Zia-ud-din-Barani seems to be immense, as in his writings, he was able to articulate the scenario of the political life in the middle ages focussing on the functional aspects of the institution of the Sultan with reference to the Islamic faith on the one hand and the social dynamics of life of the common people on the other.

As one of the main intellectuals of the Delhi Sultanate, Barani wrote a number of books and monographs detailing the various aspects of the social and political life of the medieval ages. Sufficiently enriched and authenticated by his first-hand experiences in the functioning of the monarchy during the Sultanate period, two distinguished works of Barani that stand out are reckoned as the *Tarikh-i-Firozeshahi* and the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*. Keeping with the tradition of the historians writing under the patronage of a king, *Tarikh-i-Firozeshahi* was also authored by Barani in a eulogising tone to the rule of Firoze Shah Tughlaq, to begin with. But with

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the withdrawal of patronage, *Tarikh-i-Firozeshahi* is concluded with scornful critique of the rule of Firoze Shah Tughlaq. Though *Tarikh-i-Firozeshahi* carried certain insightful comments on the functional dynamics of monarchy in the medieval times, the substantial theorisation on the political philosophy of the Sultanate period is found in the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*, for it is in this treatise that Barani presented a dispassionate and critical view of the political and administrative systems prevailing in the times of Delhi Sultanate, with the king standing at the apex of the state and government.

Barani's theorisation of the concept of state and the ideal Sultan is reminiscent of the peculiarity of the political thought in the medieval times. Taking Prophet Mohammad as his reference point, Barani asserted that the Prophet was the embodiment of state on earth, having blessed to be so by the Almighty himself. After the departure of the Prophet from the scene, Sultan succeeded him to rule over the people as the representative of God. Thus, in Barani's formulations, the state in the medieval times used to be somewhat a theocratic state based on the stipulations put forward by God through the persona of the Prophet Mohammad. Consequently, the two holy codes of Quran, comprising of the fundamental guidelines of life based on the teachings of Mohammad, and *Shariat*, providing the operational framework of state and government drawing on the precepts of Quran, were supposed to be the supreme laws of the land and an ideal Sultan was expected to discharge his responsibilities of governance only in accordance with the prescriptions of the two holy books.

The fundamental thrust of the *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* seems to be on providing the ideal Sultan with a set of advices (*nasihat*s) in guiding his conduct both in his personal as well as official capacities. It is by way of these advices that Barani tried to propound his theory of the ideal Sultan and commented on various other aspects of state and government as existing in the medieval period. Born out of his deep knowledge drawn from his ancestral interactions with various Muslim rulers as well his own first-hand experiences in the conduct of the affairs of governments during the times of the Tughlaqs, Barani's advices appear to be an admixture of the analysis of particular scenarios experienced by the Sultans over different times, and appropriate prescriptive suggestions to the Sultan regarding the probable ways out to either avoid or wriggle out of such precarious circumstances. Thus, the advices of Barani tend to

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have a critical analysis of the prevailing situations on the one hand and articulate Barani's own perspective on those circumstances on the other hand.

A remarkable feature of Barani's theorisation on the polity of the medieval times is its distinct class character dominated by the elites having the right to collect land revenues from specified areas (Habib 1995: 82). Moreover, given the foundational support provided to the kingdom by the two formidable pillars of administration and conquest, it was obvious that the bureaucracy and the army form an inevitable part of the ruling elites during the medieval period. However, the top echelons of the bureaucratic setup of the Sultan were essentially aristocratic, as it was staffed with the high-born Muslim men of traditional noble lineage with almost total exclusion of the low-born men from the promotional avenues of the bureaucracy. Similarly, the armed forces of the Sultan were commanded by the predominantly Muslim aristocratic class having loyalties exclusively to the persona of the king and finding a place of prominence in the court of the Sultan. Thus, the realms of state and government during the medieval times were confined to the high-born traditional nobles occupying the top positions in various sectors of the kingdom with the plebeian sections of the society standing in total disengagement with the governing elites of the society.

In the times when the whole structure and processes of government were rooted in the religious texts like Quran and *Shariat*, a profound contribution of Barani appears to be his advocacy of *zawabit* (the state laws) as an important source of law in governing the state. The basic rationale for the acceptance of *zawabit* by Barani seems to be his realisation that with the changing complexion of society and the increasing complexity of administering the diverse populace and unwieldy empires, it might not have been possible to do the things strictly in accordance with the stipulations laid down in *Shariat*. Hence, Barani expressed himself in favour of *zawabit* whose foundations were non-religious and secular. Though he maintained that the *zawabit* should not be overtly contradictory to the precepts of the *Shariat*, he asserted that the former should be given due weightage in the state as its aim is to introduce functional flexibility in the works of various governmental departments on the one hand, and foster loyalties to the king and the state on the other.

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In the end, Barani turns out to be the real and authentic source of information and subsequent theorisation on the state of things existing in the middle ages. The unique contribution of Barani to Indian political thought seems to lie not only in elucidating the foundation and functioning of an Islamic state based on the precepts of Quran and *Shariat*, he was also eloquent enough in portraying the subtle transformations which the classical Islamic systems of state and government underwent over a period of time in India in the medieval times. Thus, despite being a conservative aristocrat in his outlook, Barani seems to be aware of the necessity of stability and flexibility in the affairs of the state for the securing of which he appeared to be prepared to even mildly compromise with certain norms of the traditional Islamic law (Habib 1980: 113–15).

As the above discussion of two contrasting perspectives shows, Indian social and political thought is perhaps a vantage entry point to grasp the ideas that were a peculiar admixture of both conflicting and complementary ideas drawn on various sources. It would also be wrong to simply accept that the well-entrenched 'Indian' values had no role to play in this process; in fact, it was a creative articulation of ideas that had an imprint of both the foreign and indigenous influences. It cannot, therefore, be characterised as a 'derivative' discourse per se; its articulation in the Indian context also suggests that by indigenising these ideas, those who formulated the ideas out of their serious engagement with the prevalent socio-economic and political context creatively constructed new set of models which were neither imitative of the past nor purely 'traditional' in its orthodox sense.

CONCEPTUALISING MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Indian political thought involves three related issues of 'nation', 'nationalism' and 'national identity'. For obvious reasons, these three ideas constitute the foundation, as it were, of any nationalist discourse. Based on specific experiences, the thinkers engaged in this project seek to articulate a voice which is neither absolutely derivative nor entirely delinked with the context. In other words,

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the ideas are constructed, nurtured and developed within a social, political and economic milieu that can never be wished away in conceptualising social and political thoughts. What is most determining in the entire process is the organic link with a particular reality that always leaves an imprint on the construction of ideas. The purpose of this introduction is to capture the complex interrelationship between the ideas and reality in the context of exogenous but formidable influences of colonialism. Implicit in this process is the dialectics of social and political changes shaping 'the mind' of an age that is simultaneously a point of departure and convergence with its immediate past. Presumably because the ideas that constitute 'the core' of new thinking are an outcome of a process in which both the present and past seem to be important, they are creatively articulated underlining both the influences.

Conceptualising nationalism is problematic. Identifying a nation is equally difficult. Scholars differ radically as regards the nature of this phenomenon. Part of this reason is probably located in the peculiar socio-economic circumstances that contribute to the consolidation of nationalism as an ideology. Hence, anti-colonial movements in different parts of the world are differently constituted and textured. Despite the obvious difference in its manifestations in different locations, nationalism is probably the most effective political instrument in political mobilisation against colonialism. What brings otherwise the disparate masses together is a sentiment, articulated in the form of a nationalist ideology that transcends barriers of different kinds for a cause in a particular context. Nationalism creates and sustains an identity by fusing the socio-economic properties of a community with its political and territorial habitat. Through cultural symbols underlining fraternity among a specific group of people, it also creates probably the only credible basis for socio-political unity. By nurturing specific belief systems and displaying its ideas in popularly tuned images, the ideology championing the aspirations of a nation sustains credibility despite odds. The power of nationalism probably lies in the fact that belonging to a nation provides a powerful means of identifying and locating individual selves in the world through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture.

In recent years, scholars have brought out several new dimensions of nationalism as a conceptual category. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) is a major intervention in the debate

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on the subject, with an argument that nations were not so much the product of specific sociological circumstances such as language, race, religion, and so on but were imagined into existence. Nations seen as 'imagined communities' appear to be a useful construct in underlining the homogeneity of interests of various sections of a society in any struggle against colonial powers. While endorsing the basic premise of Anderson, Partha Chatterjee (1986, 1994) provides a creative interpretation of nationalism in the context of anti-colonial political mobilisation in India. Chatterjee accepts the basic premise about the essentially 'invented' nature of national identities and the importance of such factors as 'print capitalism' in their spread and consolidation. He, however, challenges Anderson's assumption concerning 'modular forms' of nationalist intervention since it ignores the point that if modular forms are made available, nothing is left to be imagined.

In Chatterjee's formulation, Afro-Asian nationalism was based on difference and, therefore, it is wrong to conclude that the nationalist discourse that galvanised the masses into action was entirely derivative and heteronymous. It is true that the non-western leaders involved in the struggle for liberation were deeply influenced by European nationalist ideas. They were also aware of the limitations of these ideas in the particular socio-economic contexts of Africa and Asia due to their alien origin. So while mobilising the imagined communities for an essentially political cause, they spoke in a 'native' vocabulary. Although they drew upon the ideas of European nationalism, they indigenised them substantially by discovering or inventing indigenous equivalents and investing them with additional meanings and nuances. This is probably the reason as to why Gandhi and his colleagues in the anti-British campaign in India preferred *swadeshi* to nationalism. Gandhi avoided the language of nationalism primarily because he was convinced that the Congress flirtation with nationalist ideas in the first quarter of the twentieth century frightened away not only the Muslims and other minorities but also some of the Hindu lower castes. This seems to be the most pragmatic idea one could possibly conceive of in a country like India that was not united in terms of religion, race, culture and common historical memories of oppression and struggle. Here is located the reason why Gandhi and his Congress colleagues preferred the relaxed

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and chaotic plurality of the traditional Indian life to the order and homogeneity of the European nation–state because they realised that the open, plural and relative heterogeneous traditional Indian civilisation would best suit Indians. In view of the well-entrenched multilayered identities of those identified as Indians, the drive to revitalise the civilisation of India was morally more acceptable and politically more effective.

Political freedom from the British was necessary not for conventional nationalist logic but because it choked and distorted India's growth as a civilisation. Such an argument probably explains why the Gandhi-led nationalist movement contained essentially 'Indian' features. Drawing upon the values meaningful to Indian masses, the Indian freedom struggle developed its own modular form which is characteristically different from that of the West. Although the 1947 Great Divide of the subcontinent of India was articulated in terms of religion, the nationalist language drawing upon the exclusivity of Islam appeared absolutely inadequate in sustaining Pakistan resulting in the rise of Bangladesh in 1971.

CONSTRUCTING THE NATION

India was not a nation in the stereotypical sense as it lacked the classical ingredients of nationhood. Yet, there were constant endeavours during the colonial rule to attain nationhood on the part of those seeking to articulate nationalist aspirations. The process that contributed to the constitution of the nation began in an earlier phase of cultural contestation through various social and political reform movements. There are three major ways in which this process got articulated. First, the appropriation of the popular that was translated into an effort towards developing a national culture, without seeking to homogenise the nation which was not united in the European sense. Since the popular was conceptually pervasive, the nationalist thinkers generally sought to articulate their arguments in popular terms. *Swadeshi* was perhaps the most ideal expression to gain maximum political mileage in a context wherein the conventional nationalist logic seemed to be divisive. The second way was the 'classicisation' of traditions whereby attempts were made to create a history of the nation. By drawing

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upon the historical memories, the past of the nation was sought to be captured in the form of a history. A classicisation of the past involved appropriation of the so-called 'Indian tradition', including such overtly anti-Brahmanical movements as Buddhism, Jainism and the various deviant popular sects. Islam could not be accommodated in this tradition since it was an alien religion and had also an alternative tradition. Islam's contribution to the history of the nation was recognised merely as 'a foreign element', domesticated by sharing the so-called classical past of the nation. The third way concerns the structure of the hegemonic domain of nationalism where colonialism was never allowed to intervene. The contradiction between the colonisers and the colonised clearly separated their respective domains. On this basis, the anti-colonial nationalist struggle created its own domain of sovereignty confronting the imperial power. This is usually explained in a theoretical format dividing this domain between 'material' and 'spiritual' or 'inner' and 'outer'. The material domain constituted the economy, science, technology and statecraft in which the West proved its superiority and the East had 'succumbed'. There was, however, an inner domain drawn on the unique spiritual and cultural resources of the East. Although the West was politically dominant, its role was marginal in the inner domain presumably because of its failure to comprehend the complexity of the spiritual and cultural world of the East. This had a significant consequence. With growing influence of the West in the public sphere, the nationalist project was sought to be strengthened by looking more and more at the inner domain. By drawing upon the spiritual and cultural strength of the imagined nation, those seeking to identify its 'distinctiveness' vis-à-vis the West initiated a process that loomed large, particularly in the twentieth century, when Gandhi organised a mass campaign by underlining the role of a colonial power in undermining India's age-old 'civilisation'. Similarly, Tilak's critique of the 1890 Age of Consent Bill is, therefore, a part of wider nationalist agenda seeking to protect the distinct Hindu identity of which caste remains a non-negotiable dimension. In his perception, the Bill struck at the foundation of caste and the *sudharak*s undermined 'the power of caste panchayats' by allowing the colonial ruler to intervene in an exclusive domain of Hindu society and, hence, it needed to be resisted (Chatterjee 1994: 4–7).

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CONTEXT AS A DRIVING FORCE

Indian social and political thought is contextual. Hence, a unilinear explanation of its evolution can never be tenable. Ideas metamorphose in response to the milieu contributing to their germination. Under colonialism, the role of the alien power seems to be a significant determinant in the articulation of the ideas which can either be 'oppositional' or 'supportive' of the regime it creates. So the changing nature of the ideas is largely an outcome of this process involving the incipient nation and its *bête noire*, the colonial power. This invariably draws our attention to an interplay in which society, economy and polity interact with each other in a very complex manner, obviously under the paradigm of colonialism. For analytical purposes, one can theoretically distinguish two phases of Indian nationalist movement. The first is roughly described as pre-Gandhian phase while the second phase is known as Gandhian phase when the Mahatma reigned supreme both in conceptualising and articulating the freedom struggle. Following the rise of Gandhi, the nature of the nationalist intervention had undergone dramatic changes. Nationalist articulation in this phase was neither 'elite actions' of the Extremists nor 'constitutional reconciliation' of the Moderates but the growing importance of the mobilised masses where the Gandhian voice appeared to be most crucial.

Within this broad typology, one can also think of further classification of Indian nationalist thought in terms of separate ideological moments. According to Partha Chatterjee (1986), nationalist thought in India has three well-defined moments which are defined as moments of 'departure', 'manoeuvre' and 'arrival'. The moment of departure epitomises an encounter of a nationalist consciousness with the framework of knowledge, created by post-Enlightenment rationalist thought. It contributed to an awareness—and acceptance as well—of the basic cultural differences between East and West. Accepting that the European culture was superior to the traditional East, thinkers like Bankim, Dayanad or Phule were in favour of adopting the modern attributes of European culture to strengthen the disparate collectivity, vaguely defined as 'a nation'. The second phase of the nationalist thought is known as a moment of manoeuvre because of the capacity of the nationalist leadership to govern the articulation of the nationalist thought in terms of its own priority. One of the distinguishing features of this

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period was the prevalence of several ideological possibilities. Not only was Gandhian non-violence dominant, there were multiple ideological strands opposed to Gandhi and his worldview. Given the articulation of diverse ideological constructs, this was an interesting phase when national political thought was perhaps the most complex for obvious reasons. Apart from competing ideologies that tried to nurse specific constituencies, Gandhi's *swadeshi* was also an all-embracing ideological platform where nationalists of all shades came together. This is why Gandhi was most significant in this phase. The moment of arrival is when nationalist thought attains its fullest development. It becomes a discourse guiding the socio-economic development of the young nation that gained political salience in its struggle against the alien power. The nation articulates itself in an unambiguous voice, as it were. Glossing over the ideological divergences, the nation was now engaged in developing a unified life history that was hardly challenged, due presumably to the hegemonic influence of what was defined as 'common concern'. Jawaharlal Nehru is probably the most powerful thinker in this phase when the idea of a nation–state was both articulated and consolidated within this mould. Nationalism, therefore, became a state ideology by clearly guiding the incipient state to an ideological goal that was peripheral in both the earlier phases.

The evolution of nationalist thought needs to be contextualised in the larger social processes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The two most obvious ones are nationalism and democratisation. In the context of the first, the question that deserves careful attention is as to why communities seek to redefine themselves as nations. What mark of distinctiveness does being a nation carry and, as a corollary, what is denied to a community and its members if they do not claim their status as a nation? After all, the obsessive desire of communities to claim the status of nations or to define India as a nation is historically conditioned and textured. Simply put, after the late nineteenth century, the claim to any form of self-government was shelved so long as it was not articulated as the claim of a nation. Colonial sovereignty in part rested upon denying that India was a nation. The nationalist project was not simply something that elites dreamt up to define others in their image; it also sought to identify and highlight the distinctive features of a population to justify its claim for nationhood.

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The belief in an Indian nationhood as a historical fact was based on western models. But it 'was also an emotionally charged reply to the rulers' allegation that Indian never was and never could be a nation' (Raychaudhuri 1999: 18). The construction of even a vaguely defined Indian nationhood was a daunting task simply because India lacked the basic ingredients of a conventionally conceptualised notion of a nation. There was, therefore, a selective appeal to history to recover those elements transcending the internal schism among those who were marginalised under colonialism. Hence, an attempt was always made in a concerted manner to underline 'the unifying elements of the Indian religious traditions, medieval syncretism and the strand of tolerance and impartiality in the policies of Muslim rulers' (ibid.). So the colonial milieu was an important dimension of the processes that led to a particular way of imagining a nation in a multiethnic context like India which is so different from the perceptions based on western experience. The political sensibilities of Indian nationalism 'were deeply involved in this highly atypical act of imagining' (ibid.).

FREEDOM STRUGGLE AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Apart from colonialism, the major factor that contributed to the formation of a political entity that was India was the freedom movement. It is, therefore, no exaggeration to suggest that the Indian consciousness, as we understand today 'crystallised during the national liberation movement' (Oommen 1990: 39). So national 'is a political and not a cultural referent in India' (ibid.). This perhaps led the nationalist leaders to recognise that it would be difficult to forge the multilayered Indian society into a unified nation–state in the European sense.

The early nationalist responses were, for instance, highly fractured in diametrically opposite ways. While the Moderate viewpoints were articulated in opposition to the British rule in a strictly constitutional manner, the Extremists, by simply paying no heed to this, experimented with a completely different method of anti-British campaign in which violence was justified as well. The idea of independence dawned on them, though their definition of nation did not appear to have reflected the highly diversified Indian society. For instance, the lukewarm attitude to the Muslims

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followed their interpretation of the Islamic rule as barbaric. Yet, there was ambivalence in characterising the Indo-Islamic phase of Indian history. In its later conceptualisation, radicalism, however, was defined to incorporate the Muslims as well presumably because of the impact of Gandhian mass politics. With the rise of the Muslim League in 1906 and the increasing role of religious schism in nationalist response, Muslims grew in importance not only in the British-initiated constitutional arrangement but also in the nationalist political articulation. The other dimension that gained political mileage was the nationalist urge to incorporate the hitherto neglected sections of the society, namely, peasants and workers. Drawn on their faith on national democracy, the radicals of the Gandhian period sought to mobilise both the peasantry and workers, of course, within the broad nationalist paradigm of anti-British struggle. What it suggests is the growing complexity of radicalism as a socio-political goal as well as its ideological components, which were contingent on the milieu in which it was articulated.

Nationalism is, therefore, not only a political method it is also about fashioning self-representations. While the Hindu identity governed the political discourse in the first phase of radical politics, the complex national identity, inclusive of both religious and other vertical divisions within different religions, figured prominently in later radical conceptualisation. Not only were the subalterns sought to be mobilised, there were also attempts to avoid the nationalist language that tended to homogenise the nation ignoring the socio-cultural distinctiveness of religious communities. Drawn on the dichotomy between nationalism and communalism, the early nationalist argument contributed to a nationalist ideology that was an upshot of a search for alternative which was neither derivative nor purely indigenous.

CONSTRUCTING PAN-INDIAN NATIONALISM

Realising the conceptual limitation of nation as a category for political mobilisation in a fractured society like India, the radical thinkers put forward an innovative formula seeking to expand the nationalist domain by linking regional issues with their pan-Indian counterparts. This resulted in two types of complementary

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responses: on the one hand, it created awareness among people in various parts of the country, though not always affected in the same degree of the exploitative and anti-Indian nature of British rule which, on the other hand, linked the regional aspirations for political freedom with the national campaign. In such a process where regional issues became national, the unifying role of the British administration was no doubt significant. The process was not without friction however. But the internal ideological struggles produced probably the most complex and non-western construction of nation and nationalism. As evident, a claim to difference and, at the same time, appreciating the western ideals of reason and humanism seemed to have figured prominently in the radical search for ideological alternative. Past was given great descriptive salience so long as it served the present purpose. So, it was not surprising for the early nationalists like Ram Mohan, Bankim or Dayananda that the Hindu past was preferred to the Islamic past in accordance with an ideological design that had a natural appeal to the majority Hindu community.

By ideologically dissociating from the mendicant nationalism of the first generation of Congressmen, the Extremist thinkers made the nationalist discourse highly masculine. Whether it was the social radicalism of Jotiba Phule or Ram Mohan, or political radicalism of Bankim, Aurobindo, Bipin Chandra Pal or Tilak, what ran through their writings was an aggressive stance on both social and political issues. Based on opposition, the radical nationalist discourse was articulated in two distinct and yet complementary ways: first, the ideologues of social radicalism expressed their resentment in categorical terms against 'distorted' Hinduism while those with politically radical views suggested inspirational elite action plans as illustrative of the masculinity of the nationalist endeavour. It was not, therefore, surprising that both Ram Mohan and Phule argued strongly against the archaic Hindu social customs that, *inter alia*, privileged the upper castes as against those at the bottom of an artificial social hierarchy in the name of the so-called religious purity. Similarly, issues like widow remarriage or education of girls that Phule took up clearly indicated the extent to which they were grounded on an urge for dramatically altering the prevalent social norms and value systems despite strong opposition from those supporting the status quo. Even the arguments that Phule made to defend Ramabai's conversion to Christianity were an

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aggressive critique of Hinduism that completely lost its vitality by the distortions, made by the Brahmans to sustain their hegemony in society. Second, radical nationalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries underlined its masculine character by encouraging violence against the rulers. This new stress was best represented by some of the most romantic forms of protest against colonialism, such as the immensely courageous but ineffective terrorism of Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab led by semi-westernised, middle class, urban youth. Despite its failure to attain the goal, radical nationalists sought to redeem Indian's masculinity by their aim to defeat the British even by resorting to violence.

So, radical nationalism in its various forms not only influenced the course of the freedom struggle but also contributed to its conceptualisation. Central to this articulation was a concern for change, whether at the social, cultural or political front. Radical thinkers inspired the nation by drawing upon its distinct socio-cultural identity while their political agenda was informed by an urge to get rid of oppression of any kinds. For the early nationalists, it was the ruler—whether the Mughals or their successor the British—that was the principal target; for the later radicals, especially in the Gandhian phase, apart from the alien government, their attack was also directed against the landlords and industrialists. What it shows was not only the changing ideological contours of radicalism but also its expanding scope that took into account the gradual extension of the constituencies of nationalist politics. So it would be wrong to characterise radicalism as an example of ideological dilution because it was, for obvious reasons, hardly a static conceptual formation. Instead, given its dynamism, radicalism was, as shown above, a creative formulation both as an oppositional method of struggle and a device to ideologically combat the prevalent conceptualisations of nationalist politics whether in its militant or non-violent form.

REDEFINING THE CONTOUR OF NATION

The second broader context that appears to have decisively shaped the nationalist thought is democratisation. What sort of unity does democracy require? After all, it was a staple of liberal discourse (John Stuart Mill, for instance) that democracy could not flourish

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in multiethnic societies. The important thing about Jinnah and Savarkar is that they were deploying precisely the liberal argument about why a unitary nationhood is necessary for a modern polity. And then, they provided their own interpretations of how this was to be attained. Second, democracy complicates the problem of representation. What is being represented and on what terms? After all, the divisions between the Congress and Muslim League turned on issues of representation. This is, however, not to suggest that the state created two monolithic communities and these communities came into being through the politics of representation, since the relationship between identity and democracy is far deeper and complex than it is generally construed in contemporary discourses on South Asia. Identity politics is about expressing one's agency and creating new forms of collective agency. In this sense, they are part of the democratic ferment where people want to fashion identities for themselves. This process will happen at all levels with a complicated relationship between the levels.

Furthermore, democratisation is both inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive because it unleashes a process to include people, at least theoretically, regardless of class, clan and creed; it is essentially a participatory project seeking to link different layers of socio-political and economic life. As a movement, democracy thus, writes Charles Taylor (1998: 144), 'obliges us to show much more solidarity and commitment to one another in our joint political project than was demanded by the hierarchical and authoritarian societies of yesteryears.' This is also the reason why democratisation tends towards exclusion that itself is a byproduct of the need of a high degree of cohesion. Excluded are those who are different in so many ways. We are introduced to a situation where a communal identity can be formed or malformed in contact with significant 'others', generally projected with an inferior or demeaning image.

The 1919–21 Non-Cooperation–Khilafat Movement is illustrative here. By a single stroke, both Hindus and Muslims were brought under a single political platform submerging, at one level, their distinct separate identities. At another level, this movement is a watershed in the sense that these two communities remained separate since they collaborated as separate communities for an essentially political project. So the politics of inclusion also led towards exclusion for the communities which identified different political agenda to mobilise people.

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NATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

In the imagination of national identity, both these forces of nationalism and democratisation appeared to have played decisive roles. Nationalism as a concerted effort was not merely unifying, it was also expansive in the sense that it gradually brought together apparently disparate socio-political groups in opposition to an imperial power. The character of the anti-British political campaign gradually underwent radical changes by involving people of various strata, region and linguistic groups. The definition of nation also changed. No longer was the nation confined to cities and small towns, it also consisted of innumerable villages which so far remained peripheral to the political activities generated by the freedom struggle. Whatever the manifestations, the basic point relates to the increasing awareness of those involved in nation-building both during the anti-imperial struggle and its aftermath.

The construction of national identity has thus to be viewed in the context of a search for nationhood by those who apparently felt threatened under the prevalent socio-economic configurations. For instance, one of the first serious attempts to establish the Indian Muslims as a separate national community was made by Rahmat Ali. Although Rahmat Ali clearly articulated the demand for a separate national status for the Muslims, the 1916 Lucknow Pact appears to be the first well-defined attempt in this direction. In his earlier incarnation as the member of the Congress, Jinnah—underlining the distinctiveness of Muslims as a community—defended separate electorates for them as the only mechanism to defuse inter-community tension. Such Muslim leaders were clearly in favour of separate electorates for the Muslims for protection of their distinct identity as compared with the Hindus. It was, therefore, easier for the British to pursue a policy that culminated in the 1932 Communal Award. Not only was the Communal Award an institutional device to split the Indian communities on grounds of religion, it was also an obvious choice for the British, given the fact that Indian society is essentially a congeries of widely separate communities with divergences of interests and hereditary sentiments which for ages have precluded common action or local unanimity. The 1932 scheme was the culmination of a series of efforts, undertaken by the Muslim leadership to ascertain both the

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distinctiveness of the community and thus the extent to which it was separate from the Hindus. In the context of the new political arrangement following the adoption of the 1935 Government of India Act, the communal equations appeared to have significantly influenced the course of India's freedom struggle. A.K. Ghuznavi, a prominent Muslim leader, in his memorandum to the Simon Commission, 1927, emphasised that as the Muslim community was educationally, economically and politically behind the Hindus, 'further extensions of parliamentary institutions without proper and definite safeguards would place the Muslims permanently in a position subservient to the Hindus.'[2] Jinnah's 14 Points Programme was the formulations of the above in concrete terms. These points, *inter alia*, demanded that all legislatures in the country and other elected bodies should be reconstituted on the definite principle of adequate and effective representation of minorities in every province without reducing the majority of any province to a minority. The representation of communal groups had to be governed by means of separate electorate. So what was articulated in the 1932 Communal Award was nothing but a well-prepared design to strengthen the argument that since Muslims were a separate community with a distinct identity, their claim for a separate status within the British India appeared most logical.

WHAT THE BOOK IS (NOT) ABOUT

The book is unique in the sense that it seeks to provide a contextual study of Indian political thought which was not exactly derivative of western sources. Despite being drawn to western enlightenment, Indian nationalist leaders articulated their responses which were meaningful in the Indian context. What separates the book from the prevalent literature is the well-argued and also critical exposition of the multidimensional Indian political thought by linking it with the constantly changing socio-economic and political milieu in which it was articulated. The book is woven around three major arguments: first, Indian political thought is far more complex than anywhere else, presumably because of the volatile socio-economic conditions in which it evolved. Accordingly, the discussion is pursued linking the ideas with the context. Colonialism was a powerful input in the articulation of the nationalist response. In other

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words, Indian political thought during the nationalist period was an immediate response to the colonial rule. Second, while articulating their response, the individual thinkers reinterpreted views on Indian social and political life by drawing on both western and indigenous sources. One cannot dismiss the emotional chord that most of the nationalist thinkers had with the West, especially Britain, for a variety of reasons. In this sense, Indian political thought is a creative blend of western and Indian inputs. Hence, it would be wrong to characterise Indian political thought as purely derivative of the western sources given the clear influences of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* or any other epic and also various other indigenous tracts in shaping the ideas of these thinkers. While politically challenging the foreign domination, the nationalist thinkers always drew on the indigenous sources to meaningfully articulate their views for mobilising people against colonialism. Third, what is striking in Indian political thought is its changing nature. There is a clear demarcation between Indian political thought that was articulated before and after Gandhi's emergence as an unquestionable national leader. Dominion status and not complete independence was the political goal for most of the thinkers before the rise of Gandhi–Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose as formidable leaders in the nationalist movement. It is possible that by the time the radical Congress nationalists emerged on the scene, the constituencies of the nationalist politics were no longer confined to the metropolitan cities only but expanded considerably to the peripheral sections of society which the Congress could not afford to ignore. So the changed social base of the nationalist politics was reflected in the Congress agenda that by including the militant demands for complete independence actually articulated the pent-up aspirations of various strata of people who, so far, had remained peripheral to the campaign against the British rule.

The methodology that the book follows is not merely analytical, it is also descriptive in the sense that it has dealt with the subject in a most detailed manner. Within a broad chronological sequence, the book dwells on the representative thinkers articulating specific points of views in the context of the British rule in India. Structured in an evolutionary mould, the book discusses various strands of social and political thought with reference to their articulation and defence in a context. These various strands are not disjointed,

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presumably because the context in which they gained salience continued to remain the same.

The book is innovative for two specific reasons: first, besides dealing with Indian political thought, it will acquaint the readers with the context in which it had evolved. Unlike the conventional studies, the book is, therefore, an articulation of a process that remained critical to grasp the changing nature of Indian political thought in different timeframes. Second, in order to understand the distinct characteristics of political ideas, the book focusses on various British constitutional devices which were undoubtedly responses of the Raj to redress the genuine socio-economic grievances of various sections of Indian society. The context-drawn interpretation of these major constitutional interventions by the colonial government is what separates the book from the available literature on Indian political thought that always remained dialectically driven.

NOTES

1. Some of the ideas presented here are drawn on our earlier works, including Chakrabarty (2004).
2. India Office Records (IOR), London. Memorandum by A.K. Ghuznavi. CND 2360, Vol. XVI, p. 188.

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Part I

Revisiting the Texts

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The nationalist movement in India was not only a long drawn battle against the British colonialism to win freedom but also contributed to socio-political ideas which laid the foundation of the nation-in-the-making. The nationalist ideas evolved out of an intimate interaction with the colonial power. In different phases of India's freedom struggle, different ideas emerged that became critical in the articulation of the nationalist responses. The variety in the nationalist thinking is attributed to the fact that the participants in the freedom struggle crafted their role in accordance with their specific social locations. Although the underlying thread was anti-colonialism, thinkers differ from one another while addressing the nationalist issues, presumably because of the obvious socio-economic differences among themselves. Differences notwithstanding, the nationalist discourse in India was clearly anti-colonial in character. What is striking is also the changing nature of the nationalist response. At the outset, nationalist movement was directed for reforming colonialism that was completely illiberal and was, thus, despised by the moderate thinkers. The Extremist thinkers insisted on independence but followed revolutionary–terrorist tactics to combat the foreign rule. Following Gandhi's rise as the undisputed leader of the nationalist campaign, the freedom struggle underwent radical changes. In fact, the Gandhian phase of India's freedom struggle saw the articulation of the nationalist response from multiple perspectives. The thinkers representing this tumultuous phase of Indian nationalism were Gandhian, hardcore nationalist or internationalist in their approach. This phase also confirmed and unfolded new vistas of ideological thinking over various social issues that appeared to have plagued the Indian nationalist assault on the British government. For instance, concern for Dalits that was meaningfully articulated by Jotiba Phule in the nineteenth century became very critical in the twentieth century nationalist response. Similarly, despite being uncertain about a separate Muslim state, several nationalist thinkers, including M.A. Jinnah, were persuaded to accept the idea of Pakistan. These representative examples draw our attention to those unique features

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of the nationalist responses which are primarily context driven. Given the critical importance of the context, it is also conceptually inadequate to view Indian nationalism in the derivative format.

Quite evidently, the reconciliatory stance adopted by the early nationalists was focussed on getting to the root of the problem plaguing India in order to provide for a comprehensive critique of the British rule in India on the one hand, and seeking certain very nominal concessions in spheres like the participation of the natives in the institutions and processes of governance, reduction in the exorbitant costs of maintaining a huge army, and so on, on the other. Thus, the trend set by the early nationalists turned out to be the permanent undercurrent informing the national movement in India throughout the early phase of the freedom struggle. Indeed, the nationalist movement was not a 'war' of liberation. It began as a movement for political concessions and reforms from the British government, and it retained a compromising attitude towards the British at the outset. In the Gandhian period of mass upheavals also, it never aimed at snapping the British connection altogether (Raghuvanshi 1959: 6). Nevertheless, the intellectual pursuits of the nationalist leaders, both in trying to provide a meaningful critique of the British rule in India, as well as in articulating their considered opinions on the present circumstances and future perspectives of the Indian polity remained the most significant aspect of the history of political ideas and nationalist movement in India.

The aim of this part of the book is to provide a contextual interpretation of the nationalist thought. Hence, the chapter is structured around the main currents of the nationalist responses by drawing upon the socio-political ideas of the leading participants of India's struggle for freedom. Instead of following a chronological sequence of the nationalist articulation, this part is woven around individual thinkers, their socio-economic and political context and the ideas that they put forward to fulfil an ideological mission. What is most striking in this effort is the analytical attempt to lay out the contours of India's nationalist thought not only by reference to the individual thinkers, but also by reference to the sociological milieu in which they evolved their ideas. This analytical framework is useful to grasp the complexities of the nationalist responses that were hardly homogeneous. Undoubtedly Gandhi remained a dominant strand; his colleagues in the nationalist movement, like M.N. Roy, Subhas Chandra Bose, B.R. Ambedkar and V.D. Savarkar among others,

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also provided important inputs in the articulation of the nationalist responses, though they scarcely agreed with what Gandhi stood for. It is, therefore, plausible to argue that Indian nationalist thought had multiple axes that cannot be comprehended without grasping its socio-economic and political roots. Gandhi represented one definite strand which his colleagues, especially those who were opposed to him, never appreciated, though his success in mobilising a large segment of Indian masses for a political goal was unparallel. The following exercise is, therefore, rewarding for two basic reasons: *(a)* not only will this part acquaint the readers with the complex unfolding of the nationalist responses, it will also provoke further research given the focus on the context–text dialectics, and *(b)* by exploring the responses of the individual thinkers to Indian nationalism, this part also attests to a creative variety in the Indian nationalist imaginations and struggles under colonial modernity.

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1 Early Nationalist Responses: Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Dayananda Saraswati and Jotiba Phule

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To map the basic contour of the early nationalist response.
- To analyse the socio-political thought of thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Dayananda Saraswati and Jotiba Phule.
- To assess the early nationalist response.

There are two different phases of Indian nationalism. The first one continues till the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 whereas nationalism, in its second phase, was articulated through popular mobilisation around various kinds of anti-imperial ideologies. Of all the competing ideologies, Gandhian non-violence was perhaps the most popular ideology in organising anti-imperial movements in India. Unlike the second phase when the national intervention was primarily political, namely, the capture of state power, the first phase was largely dominated by the zeal of reform that appeared to have brought together various individuals with more or less the same ideological agenda. In these kinds of activities, individuals played decisive roles in sustaining the zeal of those who clustered around them. What inspired them was perhaps the idea of European Enlightenment that travelled to India simultaneously with colonialism. Drawn on the philosophy of Enlightenment, neither was the British colonialism condemned nor were there attempts to expose its devastating impact on India's socio-political map in the long run. In other words, colonialism was hailed for its assumed role in radically altering the archaic socio-political networks sustaining the feudal order. It is possible to argue that colonialism in this phase did not become as ruthless as it later became. And, in contrast with the past

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rulers, the British administration under the aegis of the East India Company seemed to have appreciated social reforms either as a matter of faith in the philosophy of Enlightenment or as a strategy to infuse the Indian social reality with the values on which it drew its sustenance. With this background in view, this chapter will focus on the early nationalist response to the British rule that was largely appreciated in comparison with the socio-political nature of the past rulers. Not only will there be an argument seeking to explain the uncritical endorsement of the British rule by the socially radical thinkers, there will also be an attempt to focus on the changing nature of colonialism that also had a noticeable impact on their conceptualisation of the British rule in India that became coterminous with exploitation very soon.

CONTOURS OF THE EARLY NATIONALIST RESPONSES

Before embarking on a detailed analysis of the individual thinkers, it would be appropriate to identify the sources from which they seemed to have derived their ideas in the context of an incipient colonial rule. As mentioned earlier, the first formidable influence was definitely the Enlightenment philosophy that significantly influenced the famous 1832 Macaulay's minutes. Seeking to organise Indian society in a typical western mould, Macaulay argued for an introduction of English education and British jurisprudence for their role in radically altering the feudal basis of Indian society. What was implicit in his views was the assumption that the liberal values of the British variety would definitely contribute to the required social transformation in India. So the arrival of the British in India was a boon in disguise. Not only did colonialism introduce Indians to western liberalism, it also exposed them to the socially and politically progressive ideas of Bentham, Mill, Carlyle and Coleridge, which drew attention to a qualitatively different mode of thinking on issues of contemporary relevance. The second equally important influence was the ideas of German philosophers like Schelling, Fichte, Kant and Herder. These ideas gained ground as the intellectual challenge against the British rule acquired momentum. In fact, there are clear traces of German ideas

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in Bankim's writings. Unlike Ram Mohan Roy whose historical mission was to combat the social evils in the form of inhuman customs, including the *sati*, Bankim sought to champion the goal of freedom by drawing upon the German philosophy and the Hindu past. Conceptually, the notions of *volk*, community and nation seemed to have inspired the early nationalists, including Bankim, presumably because they contributed to homogeneity despite differences in the context of foreign rule. So the primary concern of the early nationalists was not uniform: for some, the introduction of ideas of European Enlightenment was unwarranted simply because that would destroy the very basis of civilisation of India that drew, in a considerable way, on the Hindu past; while there are others who adopted a very favourable stance vis-à-vis the English rule and its obvious social consequences. The third significant influence in the early phase of Indian nationalism was the French revolution and its message of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Ram Mohan Roy was swayed by the ideas that inspired the French revolution. In his writings and deeds, Roy launched a vigorous attack on the archaic social mores dividing India along caste and religious cleavages. For him, the priority was to create a society free from decadent feudal values that simply stood in the way of attaining the goal of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. The final source is of course the traditional Indian thought that was interpreted in the context of colonial rule. Not only were there writings of William Jones and Max Muller on India's rich cultural traditions, there were contributions from the Renaissance thinkers, including Vivekananda, which provided the basis for redefining India's past glossing largely the phase of Muslim rule in India. Inspired by the message of *Bhagavad Gita*, the Renaissance thinkers supported the philosophy of action in the service of the motherland. What they tried to argue was the idea that success or failures were not as important as the performance of one's duty with 'the purest of motives'. Their attack on fatalism in Hinduism and Buddhism clearly shows how realist they were in conceptualising the outcome of human action. For them, life could be transformed in this world by individuals believing in the philosophy of action. So it was not surprising that both Vivekananda and Dayananda insisted on *karma*, or service to the humanity, as the best possible way of justifying one's existence as human beings.

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This discussion of sources is very useful in underlining the importance of intellectual threads in shaping the nationalist ideas of the early nationalist thinkers like Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, Dayananda Saraswati and Jotiba Phule. It should also be mentioned here that while seeking to articulate an alternative nationalist vision, the early nationalists were influenced by the processes of socio-economic and political churning of a particular phase of British colonialism when political articulation of freedom of the Gandhian era was a distant goal.

SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHT OF RAM MOHAN ROY

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a social thinker par excellence. His role in doing away with *sati* among orthodox Brahmans was historical. By founding Brahmo Samaj, Roy sought to articulate his belief in the Islamic notion of 'one god'. In his conceptualisation, social reform should precede political reform, for the former laid the foundation for liberty in the political sense. Given his priority, Roy did not appear to have paid adequate attention to his political ideas. Although he despised colonialism, he appeared to have endorsed the British rule, presumably because of its historical role in combating the prevalent feudal forces. Not only was the British rule superior, at least, culturally than the erstwhile feudal rulers, it would also contribute to a different India by injecting the values it represented. His admiration for the British rule was based on his faith in its role in radically altering traditional mental makeup of the Hindus. The continued British rule, he further added, would eventually lead to the establishment of democratic institutions as in Great Britain. Like any other liberal, Roy also felt that the uncritical acceptance of British liberal values was probably the best possible means of creating democratic institutions in India. In other words, he appreciated the British rule as a boon in disguise because it would eventually transplant democratic governance in India. The other area for which the role of Ram Mohan was decisive was the articulation of the demand for the freedom of press. Along with his colleague, Dwarkanath Tagore, he submitted a petition to the Privy Council for the freedom of press which he justified as essential for

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democratic functioning of the government. Not only would the freedom of press provide a device for ventilation of grievances, it would also enable the government to adopt steps for their redressal before they caused damage to the administration. Viewed in the liberal mould, this was a remarkable step in that context for two reasons: (*a*) the demand for freedom of press was a significant development in the growing, though limited, democratisation among the indigenous elites in India, and (*b*) the idea of press freedom, if sanctioned, would act as a safety valve for the colonial ruler because of the exposition of grievances in the public domain (Pantham 1986).

Ram Mohan Roy had played a progressive role in a particular historical context. While conceptualising his historical role, Roy appeared to have privileged his experience of British colonialism over its immediate feudal past. By undermining the obvious devastating impact of foreign rule on Indian society, politics and economy, he also clearly supported one system of administration over the other rather consciously, simply because of his uncritical faith in British Enlightenment in significantly transforming the prevalent Indian mindsets. One may find it difficult to digest his invitation to the British planters in India despite their brutalities and ruthlessness vis-à-vis the Indian peasants if discussed in isolation. But this was perfectly rationalised if one is drawn to his argument justifying the continuity of the empire on the basis of its economic strength. The more the planters acquire 'wealth', argued Roy, the better would be their defence for continuity in India. Given his historical role, it would not be wrong to argue that Ram Mohan Roy discharged his responsibility in tune with the historical requirement of his role in the particular context of India's growth as a distinct socio-political unit. It would, therefore, be historically inaccurate to identify him as a pro-imperial thinker simply because nationalism did not acquire the characteristics of the later period. Since his ideas—whether supporting the British or criticising the past rulers—were both historically conditioned and textured, he authored his historical role in the best possible way reflecting the dilemma of the period and the aspiration of those groping for an alternative in the social and political doldrums of incipient colonialism.

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BANKIM AS A NATIONALIST THINKER

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–94) was probably the first systematic expounder in India of the idea of nationalism. His unique contribution lay in conceptualising nationalism in indigenous terms. In opposition to the Muslim rule, Bankim elaborated the idea by drawing upon the *Bhagavad Gita* that was widely translated in Bengali in the nineteenth century. In his translated version of *Bhagavad Gita*, what Bankim provided was a reinterpretation in the light of western knowledge to make the *Gita* more suitable to read for the western educated intelligentsia in the newly emerged context of the nationalist opposition to the British rule. An entirely new *Gita* emerged, reflecting the concerns of those seeking to provide a national alternative to foreign rule (Chatterjee 1986: Chapter 3).

What was primary in Bankim's thought was his concern for national solidarity, for on it depended the growth of the Hindu society. National solidarity is conceivable, as Bankim argued, only when there is a change in one's attitude in the following two ways: first, the conviction that what is good for every Hindu is good for me, and my views, beliefs and actions must be consistent with those of other members of the Hindu society. And, second, one should inculcate a single-minded devotion to the nation and its interests. This was an idea that Bankim nurtured in all his novels and other writings because he believed that without care and love for the nation (and implicitly for the country) one simply failed to justify one's existence as a unit in a cohesive whole called the nation. Here lies an important theoretical point. Unlike typical liberals, Bankim was in favour of community and the role of the individual was explained in terms of what was good for the former. Bankim was of the opinion that the contact with the British enabled the Hindu society to learn its weaknesses not in terms of physical strength but in terms of what he defined as 'culture'. Hindus lack the culture simply because they are so diverse, separated by language, race, religion, and so on, and it would not be possible for them to create conditions for national solidarity unless these divisive content of Hindus completely disappeared.

From the notion of national solidarity, Bankim now delved into *anushilan* or his concept of practice. Elaborating this notion in his

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1888 essay entitled 'The Theory of Religion', Bankim defined it as 'a system of culture', more complete and more perfect than the western concept of culture, articulated by western thinkers like Comte and Mathew Arnold. Critical of the agnostic western view of practice, *anushilan* was based on *bhakti* (devotion) that implied a combination of knowledge and duty. In practical terms, *anushilan* means that it simultaneously imparts knowledge of what is good for the community and what the community is supposed to do under specific circumstances. *Anushilan* implies duty that is the performance of an act for which one should not expect reward. In other words, the community is duty-bound to perform certain acts not out of choice but out of devotion to a cause or a goal. From this, he derived the idea of duty towards the nation. There was no choice and the community had to work for the defence of the nation that was completely crippled due to specific historical circumstances. For Bankim, this selfless and non-possessive notion of devotion lay at the foundation of *dharma* or religion (Tripathy 1967).

By underlining the importance of *dharma* in national solidarity, Bankim sought to create conditions for a separate identity for the Hindu community. Not only was it necessary for a subject nation, it was also most appropriate for building a strong community on the basis of its inherent cultural strength and not merely by imitating the West. Superior in the domain of sciences and industry, the West represented a culture that succeeded in conquering the East. Hence, he argued for emulating the West in the domain of material culture. But in the domain of spiritual culture, the East was certainly superior and, hence should not be bypassed. Combining these two ideas, Bankim, thus, suggested that the West could be emulated in the domain in which it was superior while internalising the spiritual distinctiveness of the East. So, in the construction of a national identity, Bankim does not appear to be entirely xenophobic but a creative ideologue of the early nationalist movement appreciating the strength and weakness of the both East and West simultaneously. In other words, the difference-seeking project of Bankim constitutes what Partha Chatterjee defines as 'the moment of departure' in our national thought (Chatterjee 1986: Chapter 3; Kaviraj 1995).

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SOCIO-POLITICAL IDEAS OF DAYANANDA SARASWATI

While Bankim had a clear political message for the nation that lacked solidarity, Dayananda Saraswati (1825–83) who founded the Arya Samaj had concerns similar to those of Ram Mohan Roy. Primarily a social reformer, the latter believed that the success of the British in subjugating the Hindu society was largely due to its divisive nature and also the failure in realising its strength. If Ram Mohan drew upon the Upanishads and Bankim upon *Gita*, Dayananda while articulating his nationalist response, was inspired by the Vedas. The other contrasting point that marked Dayananda off from the rest lies in the utter absence of the influence of European culture and thought on him. Ram Mohan was fascinated by European Enlightenment and his response was articulated accordingly. The influence of the positivist and utilitarian philosophy was evident in Bankim's conceptualisation of national solidarity. Unlike them, Dayananda found the Vedic messages as most appropriate for inspiring the moribund nation, plagued by several ills that could easily be cured. Seeking to construct a strong Hindu society, Dayananda was strikingly different from other early nationalists in two specific ways: first, his response was essentially based on a conceptualisation that is absolutely indigenous in nature, presumably because he was not exposed to western ideas. Unique in his approach, Dayananda, therefore, interrogated the processes of history in a language that added a new dimension to the early nationalist response. Second, his response was also an offshoot of a creative dialogue with the traditional scriptures, especially the Vedas, which appeared to have influenced the later Extremist leadership for its appeal to distinct civilisational characteristics of India. Unlike those who were drawn to western liberal ideas, Dayananda was probably the only thinker of his generation to have begun a debate on the relative importance of the ancient scriptures in inspiring a nation that was divided on innumerable counts.

Two ideas stand out in Dayananda's *Satyarth Prakash* (The Light of Truth) that was published in 1875. First, the idea of God as an active agent of creation appeared to have appealed him the most. He asserted that the empirical world was no illusion but had an independent and objective existence. His refutation of *advaita* and *nirguna brahman* separated him from Ram Mohan and Vivekananda,

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as his denial of *sakara* and *avatara* distinguished him from Bankim and Ramakrishna. On this basis, he further argued that human action was an index of punishment and reward by God. Here, a theoretical effort was made by Dayananda to assess individual acts in terms of certain well-defined norms of behaviour in the name of God. This was what inspired Aurobindo who found in this contention a clearly argued theoretical statement not only for analysing human behaviour at a critical juncture of history but also for mobilising a vanquished nation for a goal that was to be rewarded by God. In other words, by redefining God in a creative manner, Dayananda actually articulated the Old Testament God of Justice and not the New Testament God of Love. Underling the importance of Divine in shaping human action, the Arya Samaj founder was perhaps trying to play on the religious sentiments for meaningful social activities. This was, in his views, the basic requirement for a nation to grow and prosper.

The second important idea that stems from *Satyarth Prakash* is actually a comment on the divisive nature of the Hindu society. According to him, the British victory in India was largely due to our own failings. As he mentioned, 'it is only when brothers fight among themselves that an outsider poses as an arbiter' (*The Satyarth Prakash*, quoted in Purohit 1986: 64). Furthermore, the Hindu society was inherently crippled due to practices like child marriage, carnal gratification that clearly defied the Vedas and the principles it stood for. In his words, what caused an irreparable damage to our society was untruthfulness and neglect of the Vedas. Hence, the first task was to grasp the substance of the Vedas where lay the distinctiveness of the Hindus as a race (Jones 1994). No attack on the British would succeed till this was accomplished to our satisfaction. This was probably the reason why the Arya Samaj was not allowed to involve in direct political campaign against the British.

These ideas were unique given their roots in Hindu scriptures. Here lies the historical role of Dayananda who explored the Vedas primarily to inculcate a sense of identity among the Hindus who, so far, remained highly fractured and were unable to resist the foreign rule. In other words, he turned to the Vedas to discover a *pure* Hinduism with which to confront the corruption of Hinduism in the present. He felt that the Vedas contained Hindu beliefs in their most ancient and pure form showing God to be the just and infinite creator. He called for purging of the degenerate practices

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of Hindus in the present. Dayananda was critical of the present divisive caste system that had distorted the Vedic practices since social hierarchies of the Vedic society was based on merit, ability and temperament of the individual, rather than on his birth.

Similarly, while conceptualising God as a creative agency and not solely a spiritual being, he purposely redefined the Vedic notion of God to rejuvenate a moribund nation that appeared to have lost it vigour and zeal. By defending reward and punishment as inevitable for good and bad deeds, respectively, Dayananda probably sought to eradicate the evils, impeding the growth of the Hindu society. In other words, for Dayananda, the primary task was to strengthen the moral foundation of the Hindu society that, given its inherent weaknesses, remained highly divided. Like Ram Mohan, Dayananda was a social reformer with almost no interest in politics. And, accordingly, he scripted the role of the Arya Samaj in a strictly non-political way. The reasons are obvious. In the context of a strong colonial rule, the evinced political role of the Samaj would certainly have attracted the attention of the government that was not desirable especially when the organisation was in its infancy. By deciding to stay away from politics, not only did Dayananda fulfil his historical role, he also left behind a clearly articulated nationalist response that drew absolutely on Hindu traditions and especially the Vedas (Purohit 1986).

JOTIBA PHULE: UNIQUE SOCIO-POLITICAL IDEAS

Born in 1827, Jotiba Phule (1827–90), like Dayananda, had the desire for a form of social organisation that would reflect the merits and aptitudes of the individual, rather than enforcing birth as the basis both for occupation and for religious status. The play, *Tritiya Ratna* (The Third Eye), which he published in 1855 is a powerful exposition of his ideology. The play is about the exploitation of an ignorant and superstitious peasant couple by a cunning Brahman priest and their subsequent enlightenment by a Christian missionary. Three important points stand out in this play. First, critical of Brahman domination, he made a wider point concerning the oppressive nature of Hindu religion that, in its present

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form, imposed an ideological hegemony on the *shudra*s and by suggesting several purifying rituals, it also contributed to material impoverishment of the untouchables. Second, by underlining the role of a Christian missionary who rescued the couple from the clutches of the greedy Brahman, Phule seemed to have explored the possibility of conversion as probably the only practical device to get out of the exploitative Hindu religion. Although in the play, Phule did not talk about conversion per se, he by supporting the conversion of Pandita Ramabai, a Chitpavan Brahman scholar, defended arguments in its support. To him, Christianity was not only an escape from Brahmanical oppression but also a religion offering salvation. Third, underlying this story, there remained another major ideological point concerning the importance of education in sustaining the Brahmanic hegemony in Hindu society. He was persuaded to believe that access to education, and particularly literacy in English, conferred vital social resources on the Brahmins as a social group. As a result, the Brahmans continued to dominate the contemporary social, political and administrative domains. By acquiring the new skills in the changed circumstances of the British rule, the Brahmans, therefore, sustained their influence by redefining their roles in accordance with the requirements of the day. In other words, by being English literate, the Brahmans emerged as the most useful social group that the British government could ill afford to ignore, given their obvious role in running the administration.

What historical role did Phule play? Similar to the early nationalists, the principal message that he conveyed was concerned with his model of a society free from Brahmanic exploitation. For him, the British rule was a boon in disguise for having struck at the foundation of the caste hegemony of the Brahmans. Presumably because of this dimension of the foreign rule, Phule appeared to have underplayed the exploitative nature of colonialism. It was also possible that Phule accorded top priority to his mission of securing a respectful place for the *shudratishudra* (untouchables) in the society in which Brahmans held the hegemony. Phule was not so much against the Hindu scriptures per se as he was against the values and ideas sustaining the prevalent Hindu system. In other words, by deliberately articulating his opposition to Brahmanical discourses and not Hinduism as such, Phule was perhaps trying to distance from the bandwagon against Hinduism. In his view, Hinduism is

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rooted in *Shrutis* (*Vedas*) and the *Smritis*, and Brahmans distorted them to rationalise their hegemony. Similarly, the interpretation that the Varna system (the division of society in four different clusters) was god-given and, hence, unassailable was derived from the selfish desire of the Brahmans to perpetuate their domination on the rest of the society. So, not only did he reject the Hindu system and its theoretical literature altogether, he also argued, rather persuasively, against the dichotomous nature of the Hindu society nurturing Brahmanic hegemony over the *shudras*. This was an arrangement in which, he argued further, members of the privileged segment of the society, namely, the Brahmans, tended to justify their hegemony by reference to the religious tracts and distorted practices. On the basis of his criticism of Hindu theology, he challenged the notion of *avatara* as an agency of change when the society was completely demoralised. In the Hindu conceptualisation of *avatara*, Phule found another design, coated in a religiously justified distorted version of 'good' and 'bad' to avoid friction in Hindu society. Drawn on his mission to create an equitable order striking at the roots of the dichotomous Hindu society, he never reconciled himself to the Brahmanical gods and beliefs sustaining them. In other words, by challenging the Brahmanical exposition of Hinduism from the *shudra* perspective, Phule successfully articulated an alternative discourse of history and its unfolding (O'Hanlon 1985).

For Phule, literacy and especially English education, was most useful in substantially eradicating the Brahmanical hegemony. Not only was literacy a powerful device in radically altering the existent social order, it would also bring about gender equality. Phule was perhaps the first nationalist to have seriously pursued women's literacy and an exclusive girls school was established in 1842 at his behest. In this respect, he, like Ram Mohan, appeared to have appreciated the British rule for having laid the material and institutional foundation of a modern egalitarian society. Though persuaded by liberalism of the western variety, Phule was not particularly happy with the British response to people's needs and demands. Like the other early nationalists, there was no doubt that what prompted Phule to endorse foreign rule was its role in creating a completely new socio-political system undermining the prevalent hegemony of the Brahmans over the *shudras*.

The other distinctive dimension in Phule's response is that he stands out among the early nationalists for having implemented

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his ideas, as far as possible, into practice. The *Satyashodhak Samaj* (the Society of the Seekers of Truth) that came into being in 1873 was founded with this objective in mind (Gore 1989). Not only was the *Samaj* involved in girls' formal education, widow remarriage and campaign against prohibition, it also led to vigorous debates on the nature of Hindu society and the scriptures, especially the Vedas on which it was based. So, Phule was a forerunner of Gandhi in the sense that most of the major socio-political issues that the Mahatma raised were broached by him in a context when the British rule did not appear to be as oppressive as it later became. By consistently arguing against the orthodox Hinduism denying a majority of their legitimate dues, he provided a powerful social critique of the prevalent Brahmanical practices and values, justified in the name of religion and religious texts.

ASSESSMENT OF THE EARLY NATIONALIST RESPONSES

What runs through the early nationalist response—whether Ram Mohan, Bankim, Dayananda or Phule—was the concern for massive reform in the Hindu society that had lost its vitality. Given the fractured nature of the Hindu society, it would be difficult if not impossible, they argued, for the nation to strike roots, let alone prosper. Drawn on his liberal values of the British variety, Ram Mohan welcomed the foreign rule as a significant step towards radically transforming the Hindu society by injecting the basic ideas of Enlightenment. With an uncritical faith in *Gita*, Bankim found in *anushilan dharma* an appropriate device to galvanise a moribund nation. While Dayananda distinguished himself from the rest by depending exclusively on the Vedas, Phule appeared to have been influenced by western Enlightenment in articulating his views on reform. There is an implicit assumption in what they wrote attributing the triumph of the British to the divisive nature of the Hindu society. While Bankim endorsed western superiority in the material domain and, hence, their success, he, however, drew on the spiritual resources of the Hindus in instilling a sense of identity. Interestingly, this was the running thread in the writings of Ram Mohan, Dayananda and Phule. By privileging a particular

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dimension of 'our' distinctive modernity over what was transmitted in the wake of the British rule, the early nationalists created an imagined space where the East was superior to the West. This was, in fact, a clear break with the past when British liberalism was the only intellectual format in which views on society, economy and polity were articulated. Now, in the new conceptualisation, a difference-seeking agenda figured prominently and the distinction between 'us' and 'them' was pursued consistently to develop an alternative nationalist discourse.

Another major characteristic of the early nationalist response is the way the nation was conceptualised. By avoiding reference to Muslims, these nationalist thinkers seemed to have clearly identified the constituents of the proposed nation. By drawing on exclusively Hindu traditional tracts like the Upanishads or the Vedas, the early nationalists identified the sources of inspiration for the nation at its formative phase that clearly set the ideological tone in opposition to Islam and its supportive texts. Their idea of nation had, therefore, a narrow basis since Muslims hardly figured in the conceptualisation. The explanation probably lies in the historical context characterised by the declining decadent feudal culture, supported by the Muslim rulers on the one hand and the growing acceptance of the values of European modernity on the other. Apart from Bankim who had strong views on Muslim rule, none of the early nationalist thinkers articulated their opinion on this issue in clear terms. What drove them to embark on a nationalist project was the mission to revamp and revitalise the Hindus who failed to emerge as a solid block due largely to the inherent divisive nature. Whether it was Dayananda or Bankim, the idea of consolidating the Hindus as a race seemed to have acted in a decisive manner while articulating their response. Given his interest in Persian literature and Islamic culture, Ram Mohan held different views than Bankim. Since Phule was critical of the dichotomous Hindu society, he argued in a reformist language and reference to Muslims did not appear to be relevant. In his perception, the British rule was providential simply because it provided him with intellectual resources to combat the archaic practices in Hinduism.

What is evident now is that in articulating a nation, these thinkers discharged a role that was historically conditioned. It would,

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therefore, be wrong to simply label them as partisan due to their indifference or critical comments on the Muslims and their rule. By critically endorsing the British rule as most appropriate for the nation, they were persuaded in two ways: first, the Enlightenment philosophy provided an alternative system of thought to critically assess Hinduism and traditional scriptures on which it was based. Second, by drawing upon the civilisational resources of the nation, these thinkers had also articulated an intellectual search for a model that was socio-culturally meaningful for the constituencies it was conceptualised. In this sense, the idea of nation, though narrowly constituted, seems to be a product of historical circumstances in which they were placed.

There is a final point. Their response was hardly political. While Dayananda eschewed politics altogether for the Arya Samaj, Ram Mohan was concerned more with eradicating the evil practices in Hindu society. Bankim's historical novel, *Anandamath*, had a political message in his support for the *sannyasi* rebel against the ruler. Although his ideas of state and state power are not so well-developed, his argument for the spiritual superiority of the East seems to have given him an intellectual edge over other early nationalists. Phule was also reluctant to essay the role of the *Satyashodhak Samaj* in political terms. What was central to him was to challenge the Brahmanical hegemony over the *shudra*s who constituted a majority. Given this well-defined priority, Phule scripted the role of the *Samaj* accordingly. Furthermore, the avoidance of a clear political role was perhaps strategically conditioned in a context when an anti-British stance was likely to draw government attention. In other words, apprehending damage to the mission they undertook, these thinkers were persuaded to adopt an agenda allowing them to pursue their ideological mission without governmental intervention. Despite all these, the ideas they floated galvanised the masses into action when the nationalists confronted the British government for a final showdown. Not only did they inspire the Extremists, they also provided intellectual resources to Gandhi and his followers. So, the early nationalist response forms an integral part of the nationalist thought that was differently textured in different historical circumstances depending on what was central in the nationalist vision.

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2 Moderates and Extremists: Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and B.G. Tilak

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To describe the basic ideology, strategy and policies of Moderates and Extremists.
- To contextualise the standing of Moderates and Extremists with reference to the 1907 Surat split.
- To evaluate the relative contribution of Moderates and Extremists.

The nationalist movement was articulated differently in different phases of India's freedom struggle. Apart from ideological shifts, there were noticeable differences in the social background of those who participated in the struggle against the British. For instance, the Gandhian phase of Indian nationalism, also known as the phase of mass nationalism, radically altered the nature of the constituencies of nationalism by incorporating the hitherto neglected sections of the Indian society. It would not be an exaggeration to mention that Indian masses—regardless of religion, class and caste—plunged into action in response to Gandhi's anti-British campaign. That Gandhi had inaugurated a completely new phase in Indian freedom struggle can easily be shown by contrasting it with its earlier phases, namely, the Moderate and Extremist phases. In contemporary historiography, the Moderate phase begins with the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 and continued till the 1907 Surat Congress when the Extremists appeared on the political scene. The basic differences between these two groups lay in their perception of anti-British struggle and its articulation in concrete programmes. While the Moderates opposed the British in a strictly constitutional way, the Extremists favoured a strategy of direct action to harm the British economic and political interests in India. By dwelling on what caused the dissension among those who sincerely believed in the well-being of the country, the aim of this chapter is also to focus on the major personalities who sought to articulate as coherently as possible the respective ideological points of view.

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DEFINING MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS[1]

While Moderates and Extremists constitute contrasting viewpoints, their contribution to the freedom struggle in its early phase is nonetheless significant. Moderates like Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and M.G. Ranade were uncritical admirers of western political values. They held the concept of equality before law, of freedom of speech and press and the principle of representative government as inherently superior to their traditional Hindu polity which they defined as 'Asiatic despotism'. So emphatic was their faith in the British rule that they hailed its introduction in India as a providential mission capable of eradicating the misrule of the past. Given the reluctance of the Crown to introduce representative institutions in India, Dadabhai Naoroji lamented that the British government in India was 'more Raj and less British' (quoted in Nanda 1998: 48–49). What he meant was that though the British rule fulfilled the basic functions of Hindu kingship in preserving law and order in India, its reluctance to introduce the principle of representative government was most disappointing. So, despite their appreciation of British liberalism, their admiration hardly influenced the Raj in changing the basic nature of its rule in India.

The Moderate philosophy was most eloquently articulated by Surendranath Banerji (1848–1925) in his 1895 presidential address to the Congress. In appreciation of the British rule, Banerji thus argued that:

> ... we appeal to England gradually to change character of her rule in India, to liberalise it, to adapt it to the newly developed environments of the country and the people, so that in the fullness of time, India may find itself in the great confederacy of free state, English in their origin, English in their character, English in their institutions, rejoicing in their permanent and indissoluble union with England. (quoted in Nanda 1998: 48–49)

It seems that the Moderates were swayed by British liberalism and were persuaded to believe that in the long run, the crown would fulfil its providential mission. Banerji appears to have echoed the idea of Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) who in his 1893 Poona address underlined the importance of 'loyalty to the British' in protecting India's future. As he stated, 'until we are able to satisfy

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the British people that what we ask is reasonable and that we ask it in earnest, we cannot hope to get what we ask for, for the British are a justice-loving people … [and] at their hands, we shall get everything that is calculated to make us British citizens' (Nanda 1998: 40–67). Despite his 'loyalist' attitude, Naoroji was perhaps the first Congressman who argued strongly for a political role for the Congress which was, so far, identified as a non-political platform. While conceptualising the role of the Congress in British-ruled India, Naoroji had no hesitation in announcing that the Congress 'as a political body [was] to represent to our rulers our political aspirations' (ibid.: 51).

There are four points that need to be highlighted here. First, as evident, the Moderates identified specific roles for the Congress that sought to mobilise people in accordance with what was construed as the most appropriate goal in that context. The guiding principle was to avoid friction with the ruler. In fact, this is how G.K. Gokhale explained the birth of the INC. According to him 'no Indians could have started the Indian National Congress ... if an Indian had ... come forward to start such a movement embracing all India, the officials in India would not have allowed the movement to come into existence' (Tripathy 1990: 47). Second, the philosophy stemmed from an uncritical faith of the early nationalists in the providential mission of the British and, hence, the British conquest of India was not 'a calamity' to be lamented but 'an opportunity' to be seized to 'our advantage'. So it was not surprising for Ranade to uncritically appreciate the British nation that came into existence 'by ages of struggle and self-discipline which illustrates better than any other contemporary power the supremacy of the reign of law' (ibid.: 49). This is what differentiated the British government from other colonial powers which endorsed different systems of law for the colonies. The British nation, therefore, 'inspires hope and confidence in colonies and dependencies of Great Britain that whatever temporary perturbation may cloud the judgment, the reign of law will assert itself in the end' (ibid.). Third, the Moderates believed that the continuity of the British rule was *sine qua non* of India's progress as a civilised nation. In other words, the introduction of the British rule was a boon in disguise simply because Hindus and Muslims in India, argued Ranade, 'lacked the virtues represented by the love of order and regulated authority' (ibid.). Hailing the British rule as 'Divine dispensation' (ibid.: 51), he

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further appreciated the British government for having introduced Indians to 'the example and teaching of the most gifted and free nation in the world' (Tripathy 1990: 51). Finally, Ranade defended a strong British state in India to ensure equality of wealth and opportunity for all. By justifying state intervention in India's socio-economic life, he differed substantially from the basic tenets of liberalism that clearly restricts the role of the state to well-defined domains. Here, the Moderates performed a historical role by underlining the relative superiority of a state, drawn on the philosophy of Enlightenment, in comparison with the decadent feudal rule of the past. To them, the imperial state that gradually unfolded with its devastating impact on India's economy, society and polity, was a distant object and, hence, the idea never gained ground in their perception and its articulation.

Underlying the Moderate arguments defending the British rule in India lay its disciplining function in comparison with the division and disorder of the eighteenth century. And also, the exploitative nature of imperialism and its devastating role in colonies did not appear to be as relevant as it later became. So, the Moderate assessment of British rule, if contextualised, seems to be appropriate and drawn on a new reality that was clearly a break with the past. Finally, it would be wrong to dismiss the role of the Moderates in India's freedom struggle given their loyalist attitude to the British rule for two reasons: (*a*) there is no denying that the Moderates never launched mass agitations against the alien state in India, but by providing an ideological critique of the British rule in India keeping in view the grand ideals on which the British civilisation stood, they actually initiated a political dialogue that loomed large in course of time; and (*b*) the Moderate constitutional and peaceful method of political mobilisation, if contextualised, seems to be a milestone in India's freedom struggle, for it paved the ground for other kinds of anti-imperial protests once it ceased to be effective.

In contrast with the Moderates who pursued a policy of reconciliation and compromise with imperialism, the Extremists demanded timebound programmes and policies harming the British interests in India. This new school of thought represented an alternative voice challenging the Moderates' compromising policies of conciliation with imperialism. Disillusioned with the Moderates, the Extremists believed in self-reliance and sought to achieve *swaraj* through direct action. So, there were two levels at which

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the Extremist critique had operated. At one level, they questioned the Moderate method of mendicancy that, for obvious reasons, appeared hollow when the imperial logic of the state prevailed over other considerations. In other words, the failure of Moderates in obtaining concessions for the Indians indicated the changing nature of the colonial state that had shown its true colour as soon as its political control in India was complete. So, it was a level at which the Extremists articulated their opposition both to the Moderates and the British government. At another level, the Extremists also felt the need of being economically self-reliant to fight the British state that gained in strength by exploiting India's economic resources. *Swadeshi* was not merely an economic design but also a political slogan on which India was sought to be made strong by being self-reliant. This was an area where serious intellectual contributions were made by such exponents of Extremism as B.G. Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo, and so on (see Sarkar 1989: 96–100). Unlike the Moderates who insisted on constitutional means to reform the British state, not only did the Extremists dismiss this plea as most unfortunate, they also ruled out the possibility of negotiations with the ruler for verbal concession.

There were several factors that had contributed to the disillusionment of the Extremists with the Moderates. First, the growing government atrocities, especially in the wake of the 1905 Bengal partition agitation, clearly revealed the inadequacies of the constitutional and peaceful means. In fact, the Congress strategy of persuasion was usually interpreted as a sign of weakness by the British government and its supporters. Hence, there was a growing pressure for a change of strategy to force the authority to succumb to the demands of the Indians. Articulating the feeling of the Extremist section of the Congress, Tilak thus exhorted that 'political rights will have to be fought for. The Moderates think that these can be won by persuasion. We think that they can only be obtained by strong pressure' (Tripathy 1967: 88). As evident, the friction between the two sections of the Congress reached a pinnacle and a formal division was imminent. Second, the uncritical acceptance of western Enlightenment by the Moderates was also rejected as a sign of emotional bankruptcy, especially given the rich heritage of Indian civilisation. What contributed to the sense of pride among these youths in Indian values and ethos was certainly the socio-religious movements of the late nineteenth century

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seeking to articulate an alternative theoretical design for nationalist intervention. The ideal of *Bhagavad Gita* inspired them to pursue a line of action against the alien rule for its effort to denigrate India and its cultural distinctiveness. Vivekananda was a central figure in this nationalist conceptualisation and his teachings remained a significant source of inspiration for those who were critical of blind adherence to the western ideals. Third, the recurrence of famine and the lackadaisical attitude of the British government brought out the exploitative nature of colonial power in clear terms. Even in the context of massive human sufferings, the government did not adopt measures to ameliorate the conditions of the victims. In fact, there were indications that the government deliberately withdrew relief in areas that suffered most. The true nature of colonialism came to the surface and it was alleged that the indifferent alien authority left no stone unturned to gain maximum at the cost of human miseries. What caused maximum damage to the already crippled Indian economy was an economic policy of the British government that had stopped the supply of food grains to the affected areas on the plea that it would avoid famine in places where there was apparently no crisis of food. Nobody was persuaded by this logic. Even the Moderate leaders like Naoroji and Ranade were critical of this governmental stance in the context of severe human agony that could have been avoided had the government followed a humane policy even after the outbreak of famine in certain parts of India. The atmosphere was surcharged with anti-British feelings and the failure of the Moderate Congress to persuade the British for relatively pro-people welfare policies catapulted the Extremists to the centre stage. Finally, the anti-Indian repressive measures during the tenure of Curzon as the Viceroy (1899–1905) revealed the extent to which the Moderate methods of conciliation failed. Persuaded by his belief that Indians lacked the capacity to rule, the Viceroy adopted several legislations—the 1904 Indian Universities Act, the 1899 Calcutta Corporation Act, to name a few—in which the representation of Indians was both drastically reduced and bypassed conveniently to fulfil his design. What was most distinctive in his reign was the decision to partition Bengal in 1905 that galvanised the masses into action against this imperial device of creating a religious division among Indians. Although Curzon ostensibly undertook this step for efficiency in administration,

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what prompted him was the principle of divide and rule. Since Curzon attributed the success of political movements in Bengal to the Hindu–Muslim unity, he deliberately adopted this measure to permanently separate the Hindus from the Muslims. This design caught the attention of the nationalists, irrespective of religion and ideology, and even a typical Moderate leader Surendranath Banerji while criticising Curzon for Bengal partition hailed 'this most reactionary of Indian viceroys' as someone who 'will go down to the posterity as the architect of Indian national life' (Tripathy 1990: 52). By releasing those forces in the wake of the partition agitation 'which contributed to the up building of nations', argued Banerji, 'Curzon had made us a nation' (ibid.).

As evident, by the early part of the twentieth century and especially in the context of the 1905 Bengal partition agitation, the Moderates lost credibility since their anti-imperial strategies failed to gain what they aspired for. Moreover, their faith in the British liberalism did not work to their advantage and it dawned on the later nationalist, particularly the Extremists, that the colonial power in India drew more on exploitation and less on the basic tenets of liberalism. So, the rise and consolidation of Extremism as a political ideal in contrast with the Moderate philosophy is a clear break with the past, since the principles that inspired the late nineteenth century nationalists appear to have completely lost their significance.

The distinction between the Moderates and Extremists is based on serious differences among themselves in their respective approaches to the British Empire. Based on their perception, the Moderates hailed the British rule as most beneficial in contrast with what India had confronted before the arrival of the British. Until the 1905 Bengal partition, the Moderate philosophy was based on loyalty to the Empire that had shown signs of cracks in the aftermath of atrocities meted out to those opposing Curzon's canonical design of causing a fissure among Indians by highlighting their religious schism. For an Extremist like Bipin Chandra Pal, it was most surprising because 'how can loyalty exist in the face of injustice and misgovernment which we confront everyday' (ibid.: 58). Opposed to the Moderate stance, the Extremists always considered the British rule as a curse that could never render justice to the governed in India. Not only did they challenge the British government for its evil design against the Indians, they

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also criticised the Moderates for having misled the nationalist aspirations in a way that was clearly defeating. Instead, the new nationalist outlook, articulated by the Extremists, drew largely on an uncompromising anti-imperial stance that also fed the revolutionary terrorist movement in the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. Second, the difference between the Moderates and Extremists was based on their respective approaches to the outcome of the nationalist intervention. While the Moderates stood for the attainment of self-government through gradual reforms, the Extremists insisted on complete *swaraj*. In other words, the model of self-government, as evident in the dominion of Canada and Australia, appeared to be an ideal form of government for India. The Extremist arguments were qualitatively different. By demanding complete *swaraj*, Tilak, the most prominent of the Extremists, exhorted that 'swaraj is my birthright' and 'without *swaraj* there could be no social reform, no industrial progress, no useful education, no fulfillment of national life. That is what we seek and that is why God has sent us into the world to fulfil Him' (Tripathy 1967: 88). In appreciation of this attitude, Bipin Chandra Pal, a member of the Lal-Bal-Pal (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal) group, was categorical in stating that the principal goal of the Extremist struggle was 'the abdication of the right of England to determine the policy of the Indian Government, the relinquishment of the right of the present despotism to enact whatever law they please to govern the people of this country' (Bipin Chandra Pal, quoted in Poddar 1977: 131). Third, the Extremists were not hesitant in championing violence, if necessary, to advance the cause of the nation while the Moderates favoured constitutional and peaceful methods as most appropriate to avoid direct friction with the ruler. In contrast with these means, the Extremists resorted to boycott and *swadeshi* that never evoked support from the Moderates. While defending boycott, Tilak argued that 'it is possible to make administration deplorably difficult and to create conditions impossible for the British bureaucracy by fighting for our rights with determination and tenacity and by boycott and strike' (Tripathy 1967: 86). Urging those associated with the British bureaucracy, Tilak further argued that with the withdrawal of Indians from the administration, 'the entire machinery will collapse' (ibid.: 88). Simultaneously, with the boycott of government offices, the Extremists also propagated for the boycott of foreign

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goods and promotion of *swadeshi* or home-spun. This strategy, first adopted in the context of the 1905 Bengal partition agitation, was further extended to the nationalist campaign as a whole, presumably because of its effectiveness in creating and sustaining the nationalist zeal. The economic boycott, as it was characterised in contemporary parlance, caused consternation among the British industrialists more than the other types of boycott. Fourth, the Moderates appeared to be happy under the British, presumably because of their belief that Indians were not capable of self-rule. This was what prompted them to support the British rule uncritically. The views of the Extremists were, for obvious reasons, diametrically opposite. While articulating his opposition to this idea, Tilak argued that 'we recognise no teacher in the art of self-government except self-government itself. It values freedom for its own sake and desires autonomy, immediate and unconditional regardless of any considerations of fitness or unfitness of the people for it' (Tripathy 1967: 88). Here too, the Moderate–Extremist distinction is based on serious ideological differences; while the former supported a loyalist discourse, the latter simply rejected the stance in its articulation of anti-imperialism. Fifth, in the Extremist conceptualisation of struggle against imperialism, the ideal of self-sacrifice, including the supreme sacrifice figured prominently, while in the Moderate scheme of political struggle, this idea appeared to have received no attention. This probably indicates two different faces of Extremism: on the one hand, there was the public appearance where the strategies of boycott, *swadeshi* and strike were pursued to articulate the nationalist protest; the sudden violent attack was, on the other hand, also encouraged to terrorise the British administration that was really rattled following the incessant violent interventions by those who preferred underground militant operation. One of the preferred modes of action was assassination of 'brutal' British officials. Such acts would strike terror into the hearts of the rulers, arouse the patriotic instincts of the people, inspire them and remove the fear of authority from their minds. And it had propaganda value because during the trial of those involved in conducting violent attacks on the British officials, the revolutionaries and their cause received adequate publicity not only in the pro-government but also in the nationalist media. Finally, while the Moderates drew upon the British variety of liberalism,

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the Extremists were inspired by the writings of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and the teachings of Vivekananda. In view of their faith in constitutional means of opposition to the British rule, Moderates preferred the path of conciliation than confrontation, whereas the Extremists espousing the demand for *swaraj* plunged into direct action against the government by resorting to boycott and strike. Unlike the Moderates who drew upon the ideas of Gladstone, Disraeli and Burke to refine their political strategy, the Extremists found Bankim's *Anandamath*, a historical novel that narrated the story of the rise of the Hindu s*annyasi*s vis-à-vis the vanquished Muslim rulers and Vivekananda's interpretation of Vedanta philosophy. The poem 'Bande Mataram' in *Anandamath* clearly set the tone of the Extremist philosophy in which the notion of 'Mother' seemed to be prominent. Mother, representing simultaneously the divine motherland and the mother-goddess, Durga, conveyed both patriotic and religious devotion. This was an articulation that generated mass emotional appeal which the Moderate form of constitutional agitation had failed to arouse. Bankim and Vivekananda were probably the most effective ideologues who evoked Hindu imageries, well-tuned to the contemporary scene. By overlooking the non-Hindu tradition completely and accepting the Hindu tradition as Indian tradition, they however, nurtured a narrow view of history which is misleading given the cross-fertilisation of multiple traditions in Indian civilisation.

The Extremist ideology created a leadership trio of Lal-Bal-Pal, who, while critiquing the Moderates, altered the nationalist vocabulary by incorporating *swadeshi*, boycott and national education. So popular were Lal-Bal-Pal in Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal, respectively, that Moderates seemed to have lost their credibility in these areas. Of the trio, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, rooted in Maharashtra, was perhaps the most articulate militant leader of this phase of freedom struggle. Long before his active involvement in the Congress, Tilak articulated his nationalist ideas in both *Kesari* (in Marathi) and *Mahratta* (in English). In 1893, he transformed the traditional religious Ganapati festival into a campaign for nationalist ideas through patriotic songs and speeches. Similarly, in 1896, he introduced the Shivaji festival to inspire the youth by drawing upon the patriotism of Shivaji in opposition to the Moghul ruler, Akbar. It would be wrong, however, to blame him as a 'revivalist', since he supported, most enthusiastically, the

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Ganapati and Shivaji festivals. In fact, Tilak himself responded to this charge by saying that these festivals were intended to give to the people 'a sense of belonging and to evoke in them a pride in their past' (Tripathy 1967: 90). He also dismissed the idea that he was in favour of bringing back 'the reign of Shivaji or of Peshwas' while arguing strongly for 'popular and representative government' in opposition to the 'oriental ideal of revivalism'.[2] He rose to prominence by organising a successful campaign for the boycott of foreign cloths in Maharashtra in 1896 in protest against the imposition of taxes on cotton. His involvement in the no-tax campaign in areas adversely affected by the 1896–97 famine in Maharashtra, had clearly articulated his mission of expanding the Congress base by incorporating the peasants, a constituency that was simply beyond the Moderates purview. By deciding to serve the plague victims in Poona during 1897, Tilak became a leader of the people who were automatically drawn to him on humanitarian grounds. Apart from his role in serving the victims, he wrote several pieces in *Kesari* condemning the arrangement and the steps the government undertook in combating this deadly disease. In fact, the killing of Rand, the chairman of the Plague Commission in Poona in 1898, was attributed to the popular resentment against official measures, even in the government document. Tilak was arrested following the assassination but was released soon because of lack of proof of his involvement.

Two important features in Tilak's political philosophy separated him from the Moderate thinkers. First, unlike the Moderates who argued for gradual introduction of democratic institutions in India, Tilak insisted on immediate *swaraj* or self-rule. His concept of *swaraj* was not complete independence but a government constituted by the Indian themselves that 'rules according to the wishes of the people or their representatives.'[3] Similar to the British executive that 'decides on policies, impose and remove taxes and determine the allocation of public expenditure',[4] Indians should have the right 'to run their own government, to make laws, to appoint the administrators as well as to spend the tax revenue.' This is one dimension of his thought. The second dimension relates to the notion of *prajadroha* or the right of the people to resist an authority that loses legitimacy. In Tilak's conceptualisation, if the government fails to fulfil their obligation to the ruled and becomes tyrannical, it lacks

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the legitimacy to rule. What is interesting to note is that Tilak's *prajadroha* also justifies the enactment of laws to prevent unlawful activities of the people. If contextualised, this idea makes sense because he was aware that a total rejection of the government would invite atrocities on the nationalists who had neither the organisational backing nor a strong support base among the people. So, his support for governmental preventive mechanisms was strategically conditioned and textured.

Tilak was a nationalist par excellence. In view of his uncritical acceptance of Vedanta philosophy and orthodox Hindu rituals and practices, Tilak was accused of being sectarian in multireligious India. That he upheld the most reactionary form of Hindu orthodoxy was evident in his opposition to the 1890 Age of Consent Bill that sought to raise the age of consummation of marriage of girls from 10 to 12 years. While the Moderate spokesman Ranade hailed the bill for its progressive social role, Tilak found in this legislation an unwarranted intervention in Hindu social life. Similarly, his involvement in the Cow Protection Society alienated the Muslims to a large extent from the Extremist campaign. Tilak's argument in favour of cow protection drew upon the sacredness of cow in Hindu belief, completely disregarding the importance of beef in Muslim diet. Furthermore, the organisation of national festivals in honour of Shivaji, the Hindu hero of the Maharathas, and also redefining of an essentially Hindu religious festival—the Ganapati *utsav*—in nationalist terms, set the ideological tenor of Tilak's political philosophy where Muslims seemed to be peripheral, if not entirely bypassed.

It is necessary to pause here for a moment and reassess Tilak's worldview critically with reference to the context in which it was articulated. There is no denying that underlying all these religious forms lay the national patriotic purpose. Under the cover of religious festivals, Tilak sought to create a nationalist platform for an effective mobilisation against the British that would not allow, for obvious reasons, a political campaign adversely affecting the imperial interests. Under conditions of severe governmental repression of all political agitation and organisation, before the nationalist movement had struck roots among the masses, the use of such apparently religious and orthodox forms of nationalist outpouring seems to be strategically conditioned and Tilak emerged as a master planner in refining these in the pre-Gandhian phase of

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India's freedom struggle (Chandra et al. 1988: 108). So, not only did he articulate the voice of protest in a unique vocabulary, he also expanded the constituency of the nationalist politics by proclaiming the supposed spiritual superiority of the ancient Hindu civilisation to its western counterpart. In other words, Tilak played a historical role in the construction of a new language of politics by being critical of 'the denationalised and westernised' Moderate leaders who blindly clung to typical western liberal values disregarding their indigenous counterparts while articulating their opposition to the British rule. It is possible to argue that Tilak had a wider appeal, for his campaign was couched in a language that drew upon values rooted in Indian culture and civilisation in contrast with what the Moderates upheld which were completely alien. So, Tilak was not merely a nationalist leader with tremendous political acumen, he himself represented a new wave of nationalist movement that created an automatic space for it by (*a*) providing the most powerful and persuasive critique of Moderate philosophy, and (*b*) articulating his nationalist ideology in a language that was meaningful to those it was addressed. This is how Tilak is transcendental and his ideas of *swadeshi*, boycott and strike had a significant sway on Gandhi who refined and well-tuned some of the typical Extremist methods in a completely changed socio-economic and political context when the nationalist struggle had its tentacles not only in the district towns but also in the villages that unfortunately remained peripheral in the pre-Gandhian days of freedom struggle.

THE 1907 SURAT SPLIT

From 1905 to 1907, the struggle between various trends within the nationalist articulation of freedom struggle was fought out also at the annual sessions of the Congress, culminating in the Surat split of December 1907 (see, for details, Chakrabarty 1990: Chapter 2). The flashpoint was the 1905 Bengal partition that appeared to have enabled the Extremists to provide a sharp critique of the Moderate strategies that had miserably failed. The Moderate method of constitutional agitation, articulated in three Ps—petition, prayer and protest—remained largely an academic exercise that seemed to have exhausted potentials with the consolidation of various groups championing direct action against the British. Condemning the

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Bengal partition and the repressive measures, Gokhale in his 1905 Benaras presidential address referred to economic boycott in a very lukewarm manner to avoid further repression by the government. The 1906 Calcutta Congress fulfilled the Extremists goal partly in the sense that the Congress president, Dadabhai Naoroji officially endorsed the resolutions on boycott, *swadeshi*, national education and self-government. The Extremists' effort to extend the boycott resolution to cover provinces other than Bengal as well was defeated, along with the resolution on boycott of honorary offices and of foreign goods. Enthusiastic over the victory of the Liberal Party in England, the Moderate leadership was hopeful of a series of reform measures including the annulment of Bengal partition. The appointment of John Morley as the Secretary of State in early 1907 was hailed for his liberal views and was expected to inaugurate a new face of British colonialism in contrast with the bitter legacy of the Curzon era. Despite changes in the British political climate, the friction between the Moderates and Extremists had shown no abatement and they were preparing themselves for a head-on collision in the 1907 Surat Congress presided over by Rash Behari Ghosh who was vehemently opposed by Tilak and his colleagues from Maharashtra and Bengal. This was perhaps the only annual meeting of the Congress that was dissolved without deliberations.

On the surface, one may find that the Surat Congress ended in a fiasco because it failed to amicably settle the Extremist–Moderate dichotomy. In other words, what came out this failed meeting of the Congress was largely attributed to the irreconcilable contradiction between the Extremists and Moderates over the anti-imperial political agenda. There is, however, another dimension if one goes below the surface. The antagonism that split the Congress in Surat was the product of a fierce struggle between 'the Tilakites of Poona' and the Moderates of Bombay led by Pherozeshah Mehta. In fact, the Bengal Extremists, including Aurobindo wanted to avoid the split within the Congress so as not to weaken the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal. This was expressed clearly at the Bengal Provincial Conference at Patna, presided over by Rabindranath Tagore in which a resolution for an immediate session of the Congress was accepted unanimously. Even Tilak's effort did not yield results. The Bombay Moderates remained adamant and at its 1908 Allahabad convention,

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the split was formalised by debarring those opposed to the strictly constitutional methods from participating in the Congress meetings and deliberations. The most obvious victim of this division was the nationalist movement itself that appeared to have taken a backseat during the internecine feud between the Moderates and Extremists. Interestingly, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to demarcate the Extremists and Moderates in terms of their class background. Supporting largely the Hindu vested interests, both of them, though separated ideologically, were a product of an era when the nationalist politics was primarily confined to the urban areas. While the Extremists, by encouraging individual heroism and revolutionary terrorism, inaugurated a new phase in nationalist agitation, Tilak's 1896–97 no tax campaign for the famine stricken peasants in Maharashtra was a concrete step in expanding the constituency of nationalist politics by addressing the issues that had hitherto remained neglected in the Congress agenda.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Of the different phases of Indian nationalism, the Moderate and Extremist phases represented the voices of an incipient nationalist movement that was neither properly crystallised nor had a support base among the masses. Based on their faith in British liberalism, Moderates were perfectly justified in pursuing the policy of reconciliation. The 1909 Morley–Minto Reform was probably the upper limit of what the Moderates could have gained under the circumstances. Even the revocation of Bengal partition was largely attributed to the reform zeal of the Liberal government in Britain. So, Moderate efforts did not, at least on paper, go waste. What was, however, most remarkable was the fact that the Moderate campaign let loose a process, of which Extremism was also an offshoot, whereby new ideas were set in motion. The nationalist zeal, which so far was articulated in the annual sessions of the Congress in a strictly constitutional and peaceful way, was translated into a variety of actions, including boycott, *swadeshi* and strike. This resulted in an immediate expansion of the constituencies of nationalist politics that, under the Moderates, represented largely the upper crest of the Indian society. Despite sharing more or less

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the common social background with the Moderates, the Extremists, however, addressed the issues of the peasantry and workers, of course in their terms, to underline the ideological differences with the former.

What lay at the root of the acrimonious exchange between the Moderate and Extremist leaders during the short-lived 1907 Surat Congress was perhaps the irreconcilable differences between the two. Articulating the ideological schism in probably the most sordid manner, both these groups seemed to have allowed them to be swayed by considerations other than anti-imperialism. That is why Rabindranath Tagore lamented that by determining to capture the Congress by hook or crook, the Moderates and the Extremists failed to conceptualise, let alone realise, the basic nationalist goal of serving the people and, thereby, made a mockery of themselves and also what they stood for. Despite Tagore's own efforts in bringing these two forces together in the aftermath of the Surat fiasco, the adoption of resolutions in the 1908 Allahabad convention by the Moderates for permanently disqualifying the Extremist section of the Congress underlined the declining importance of nationalism as a cementing ideology vis-à-vis the British imperialism. Also, the Extremist alternative was not qualitatively different, although the Extremists were more militant and their critique of British rule was articulated in stronger terms. They neither created a viable organisation to lead the anti-British movement nor could they define the movement in a way that differed from that of the Moderates.

It would be, however, historically inaccurate to dismiss the Moderate and Extremist efforts as futile simply because of the historical role they discharged in conceptualising the nationalist struggle in an organised manner. With a well-defined political agenda, the early Congress leadership of both varieties identified the true nature of the principal political contradiction in a colony between the ruler and the ruled. There were various counts where the efforts were neither well-tuned to the requirement nor well-directed involving people regardless of religion, caste and clan. In fact, the failure of the Congress in its formative years to address the social contradiction between Hindus and Muslims led to the growth of Muslim League in 1906 as the sole champion of the

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Muslims' socio-political interests in British India. From now on, a significant section of Indian Muslims asserted a separate identity vis-à-vis Congress and the government. Given the class bias of the Hindus, the chasm between these two principal communities had grown bigger in course of time. If this was one side of the coin, the other side provided the foundation for a qualitatively different experiment in organised politics, conducted by Gandhi through non-violence in the post-war period. Redefining the Extremist method of *swadeshi*, boycott and strike in the changed environment when the imperial power became more brutal than before, it was easier for Gandhi to mobilise the masses in the anti-British campaign. The Congress in the Gandhian phase of nationalist struggle was completely transformed into a movement that had its tentacles even in remote villages. So, Gandhi's success as a leader of a gigantic mass movement against perhaps the most organised imperial power was largely due to the organisational backing of the Congress that remained in the pre-Gandhian era a mere platform for annually ventilating grievances against the British as well as settling scores against the fellow Congressmen.

NOTES

1. The best exposition of this distinction is available in Argov (1967) and Ray (1988).
2. *Mahratta*, 21 September 1884, p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
4. Ibid., p. 4.

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3 Mahatma Gandhi

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To delineate the basic precepts critical to understanding Gandhi.
- To elucidate the conceptualisation of *swaraj* in the Gandhian thought.
- To assess Gandhi as a theorist and practitioner.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1868–1948), popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi continues to provoke interest even after more than half a century after his assassination in 1948. The much hyped reenactment of the famous *Dandi Yatra* (march) in India in 2005 which Gandhi undertook in 1930 as part of his famous salt *satyagraha* is perhaps suggestive of the relevance of Gandhian technique in political mobilisation in contemporary India. It is true that Richard Attenborough's film on Gandhi immensely popularised Gandhi all over the world, though Gandhi remains an important topic of research and discussion among those interested in exploring alternative ideological traditions. The task is made easier simply because Gandhi's own writings on various themes are plenty and less ambiguous. His articulation is not only clear and simple but also meaningful in similar contexts in which he led the most gigantic nationalist struggle of the twentieth century. Gandhi wrote extensively in *Indian Opinion*, *Young India* and *Harijan*, the leading newspapers of the era, where he commented on the issues of contemporary relevance. These texts frequently addressed matters of everyday importance to Indians in the early and middle parts of the twentieth century that may not appear to be relevant now if seen superficially. Writing for the ordinary folks, he usually employed metaphors and engaged in homilies to teach Indians about their abilities and also their strong traditions. This was one of the ways in which he involved Indians in non-violent struggles against British imperialism, untouchability and communal discord.

That Gandhi was different from his erstwhile nationalist colleagues was evident when he launched his *satyagraha* movements in remote areas of Champaran (in Bihar), Kheda and Ahmedabad (in Gujarat) instead of presidency towns that had so far remained

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the hub of the nationalist activities. His political strategies brought about radical changes in the Congress that now expanded its sphere of influences even in the villages. These three movements projected Gandhi as an emerging leader with different kinds of mobilising tactics. What was common in all these movements was the fact that (*a*) they were organised around local issues, and (*b*) in mobilising people for the movements, the role of local leaders was most critical. With his involvement in mass movements in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad, Gandhi 'forged a new language of protests for India by both building on older forms of resistance, while at the same time accepting the colonial censure of all forms of violent protest' (Hardiman 2003: 51). Two complementary processes seemed to have worked: at one level, local issues had obviously a significant role in mobilising masses for protest movements in the localities; at another, the presence of Gandhi at a critical juncture helped sustain these movements that perhaps lost momentum due to the growing frustration of the local organisers. While explaining the rise of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru (1941: 254–55) thus argued, 'Gandhiji knew India far better than we did, and a man who could command such tremendous devotion and loyalty must have something in him that corresponded to the needs and aspirations of the masses.'

Besides these local movements, Gandhi led three major pan-Indian movements. The 1919–21 Non-Cooperation Movement was the first one that gained significantly with the merger of the Khilafat agitation of the Muslims against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey. The Civil Disobedience Movement was an all-India movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme. Basically a salt *satyagraha*, the Civil Disobedience campaign had manifested differently in different parts of India. The 1942 Quit India Movement, also known as the open rebellion, was the last of the three pan-Indian campaigns that Gandhi spearheaded. Although these movements were organised in different phases of India's nationalist struggle, two features that recurred in all these instances of mass mobilisation were as follows: first, Gandhi remained the undisputed leader who appeared to have swayed masses with his charisma and 'magical power'; and second, despite their pan-Indian characteristics, these movements were independently organised by the participants drawing on local grievances both against the rural vested interests and the government for supporting them.

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Gandhi's social and political thought is multidimensional. If its kernel is derived from India's civilisational resources, its actual evolution was shaped by his experiences in South Africa and India. His political ideology was a radical departure from the past in the sense that it was neither constitutional loyalism of the Moderates nor extremism of the revolutionary terrorists. In his articulation of Indian nationalism, he sought to incorporate the emerging constituencies of nationalist politics that remained peripheral in the bygone era. Gandhi brought about an era of mass politics. So, an analysis of the role of the Mahatma in India's freedom struggle clearly indicates the changing nature of the movement in response to the zealous participation of various sections of India's multicultural society. It was possible because Gandhi was perhaps the only effective nationalist leader who 'truly attempted to transcend the class conflicts [by] devising a method which, for the first time, brought about the national aggregation of an all-India character' (Mehta 1992: 211). His social and political ideas were the outcome of his serious engagement with issues reflective of India's peculiar socio-economic circumstances. Gandhi simultaneously launched movements not only against the British rule but also against the atrocious social structures, customs, norms and values, justified in the name of India's age-old traditions. Hence, Gandhian thought is neither purely political nor absolutely social, but a complex mix of the two, which accords conceptual peculiarities to what the Mahatma stood for.

THE BASIC PRECEPTS

It is crucial for our understanding of Gandhi's social and political ideas to realise the significance of the two basic precepts of Gandhism, namely, *satyagraha*, and *ahimsa* or non-violence. Most authors on Gandhi seem to conflate the two. What is rather relatively less known is the fact that during the period between his South African experiment and the agitation against the Rowlatt Act, it was *satyagraha*—in the sense of a protest without rancour—that held the key to his entire campaign. Only in the aftermath of the 1919 anti-Rowlatt *satyagraha*, was *ahimsa* or non-violence included as integral to Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaign. There is no doubt that *ahimsa*

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always remained a significant influence in the conceptualisation of *satyagraha*; but it was not projected as crucial a component as it later became. In other words, despite its obvious importance, *ahimsa* never figured prominently in Gandhian discourse of political action. As a method, *satyagraha* was always informed by *ahimsa*, though its role was not vividly articulated till the 1919 campaign against the Rowlatt Act. From then on, the Mahatma paid enormous attention to both conceptualising and justifying the importance of *ahimsa* in political mobilisation by referring to the ancient scriptures in his defence. That *ahimsa* acquired tremendous importance following the Rowlatt *satyagraha* is also suggestive of the nature of the movement that Gandhi was contemplating in its aftermath. Gandhi was preparing for a pan-Indian Non-Cooperation Movement in the *satyagraha* format in which *ahimsa* was to play a determining role in political mobilisation. The micro-experiments of *satyagraha* in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad, where *ahimsa* was constitutive of Gandhian model of anti-imperialism, therefore, became decisive in Gandhi's social and political thought.

For Gandhi, *ahimsa* meant 'both passive and active love, refraining from causing harm and destruction to living beings as well as positively promoting their well-being' (Parekh 1999: 130).[1] This suggests that by *ahimsa*, Gandhi did not mean merely 'non-injury' to others that was a mere negative or passive connotation; instead, *ahimsa* had also a positive or active meaning of love and charity. As Gandhi clarified by saying that,

> ...in its negative form, [*ahimsa*] means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrong-doing father or son. This active *ahimsa* necessarily included truth and fearlessness.[2]

As evident, Gandhi defined *ahimsa* in two contrasting ways: on the one hand, in its narrow sense, it simply meant avoidance of acts harming others; while in its positive sense, it denoted promoting their well-being, based on 'infinite love'.[3] So, to characterise *ahimsa* as merely 'non-injury' to others was not appropriate in the sense Gandhi understood the term and articulated its sense.

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Non-violence was certainly not a negative affair; it was not non-resistance, but non-violent resistance which was, as Jawaharlal Nehru characterised, 'a positive and dynamic method of action [and] it was not meant for those who meekly accept the status quo' (Nehru 1941: 540). The very purpose for which it was designed was, 'to create "a ferment in society" and thus to change existing conditions.' 'Whatever the motives of conversion behind it, in practice, it has been', Nehru (ibid.) argued further, 'a powerful weapon of compulsion as well, though that compulsion is exercised in the most civilised and least objectionable manner'.

Ahimsa, in its positive connotation, was based on highest moral values, epitomised in 'the unselfish self'. Gandhi (1922: 7, quoted in Pantham 1987: 302–03) thus wrote,

> ...our desires and motives may be divided into two classes—selfish and unselfish. All selfish desires are immoral, while the desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others is truly moral.... The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind.

In Gandhi's experiment of *satyagraha*, *ahimsa* was a crucial variable. Not only did it enable Gandhi to provide a new conception of anti-colonial politics, it also gave him an opportunity, by completely avoiding ill-feelings towards those in opposition, to politically accommodate in his fold those who, so far, had remained peripheral. But his approach was very cautious, as he argued,

> ...*ahimsa* with me is a creed, the breath of life. It is [however] never as a creed that I placed it before India or, for that matter, before any on.… I placed it before the Congress as a political weapon, to be employed for the solution of practical problems. (Gandhi, quoted in Pantham 1987: 302–03)

So, *ahimsa* was complementary to Gandhi's model of conflict resolution that was certainly the most original and creative model of social change and political action even under most adverse circumstances. This was a theory of politics that gradually became the dominant ideology of a national political movement in which Gandhi reigned supreme. What lay at the root of this theory of politics was *ahimsa* which was 'the organising principle for a science of politics [that] was wholly different from the all

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current conceptions of politics [producing] the science of violence' (Chatterjee 1984a: 186). Not only was this theory effective in mobilising people regardless of socio-economic differences, it also provided a moral framework for 'solving every practical problem of the organised political movement' (ibid.).

Satyagraha meant resistance. Not merely passive resistance, but 'intense activity by the people.' It denoted a legitimate, moral and truthful form of political action by the people against the brutal state power. It was a movement against various forms of injustice meted out by the state. As Gandhi (1971a: 523) argued, 'we do not desire to make armed assaults on the administrators, nor to unseat them from power, but only to get rid of injustice.'[4] What it involved was a plan of action involving large masses of people targeting the state, and vested social and economic interests. In organising people for *satyagraha*, what was needed was also a level of awareness among the people linking their poverty with the exploitative alien state. Gandhi was confident that the circumstances were ready and what was required was a call for campaign. Hence, he argued just on the eve of the Rowlatt *satyagraha*,

> ...it is said that it is a very difficult, if not an altogether impossible task to educate ignorant peasants in *satyagraha* and that it is full of perils, for it is a very arduous business to transform unlettered ignorant people from one condition into another. Both the arguments are silly. The people of India are perfectly fit to receive the training of *satyagraha*. India has knowledge of *dharma*, and where there is knowledge of *dharma*, *satyagraha* is a very simple matter.... Some have a fear that once people get involved in *satyagraha*, they may at a later stage take arms. This fear is illusory. From the path of *satyagraha*, a transition to the path of *a-satyagraha* is impossible. It is possible, of course, that some people who believe in armed activity may mislead *satyagraha* by infiltrating into their ranks and later making them take to arms.... But as compared to other activities, it is less likely to happen in *satyagraha*, for their motives soon get exposed and when the people are not ready to take up arms, it becomes almost impossible to lead them on to that terrible path. (ibid.: 524)

The Rowlatt *satyagraha* translated the Gandhian ideas into action. Drawing on his faith on the spontaneous resistance of the masses to injustice, Gandhi was confident of the success of the campaign against the Rowlatt Act. There is no doubt that this 1919 *satyagraha*

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was a watershed in Gandhi's political ideas in two specific ways: (*a*) Gandhi now realised the potential of the growing mass discontent in the anti-British struggle; and (*b*) this *satyagraha* was also a litmus test for the Mahatma who now was confident of *satyagraha* as a technique for political mobilisation. For Gandhi, the Rowlatt Act was an unjust order that should be dishonoured. As he argued,

> ...whether you are *satyagrahi*s or not, so long as you disapprove of the Rowlatt legislation, all can join and [he was confident] that there will be such a response throughout the length and breadth of India as would convince the Government that we are alive to what is going on in our midst. (Gandhi 1971b: 155)

With his success in this *satyagraha*, Gandhi was now ready for a pan-Indian political movement against the ruler and the Rowlatt *Satyagraha* provided the impetus. Although Gandhi underlined the importance of *ahimsa* in *satyagraha*, he did not appear to emphasise its importance as strongly as he later did. For him, what was crucial was an organised attack on the British interest through *satyagraha* campaign. As he argued,

> ...popular imagination has pictured *satyagraha* as purely and simply civil disobedience, if not in some cases, criminal disobedience.... As *satyagraha* is being brought into play on a large scale on the political field for the first time, it is in an experimental stage. I am, therefore, ever making new discoveries. And my error in trying to let civil disobedience take the people by storm appears to me to be Himalayan because of the discovery, I have made, namely, that he only is able and attains the right to offer civil disobedience who has known how to offer voluntary and deliberate obedience to the laws of the State in which he is living. (Gandhi 1971c: 436)

So, Gandhi capitalised on the obvious mass discontent which, he translated, into *satyagraha*. Now, what are the organisational principles? In his scheme of things, a *satyagrahi* should know these principles before embarking on a campaign. As he mentioned, before they got involved in any political campaign against the ruling authority, 'they should thoroughly understand its deeper implications. That being so, before restarting civil disobedience on a mass scale, it would be necessary to create a band of well-tried, pure-hearted volunteers who thoroughly understood the strict conditions of satyagraha' (Gandhi 1971d: 374). Thus was

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conceptualised the notion of *satyagraha* as a mobilising principle governing the behaviour of those involved in the Gandhi-led nationalist campaign. And the more 'Gandhi concerned himself with the organisational norms within which a national movement had to be conducted, the more he began to elaborate upon the concept of *ahimsa*' (Chatterjee 1984b: 27). A leader was responsible to direct the mass discontent into a course of action. Masses were not trained and their behaviour even in resistance was always that of a mob. The leadership was crucial in transforming the mob into an organised mass with meaningful action to undertake. As Gandhi (quoted in ibid.) himself confessed, 'nothing is so easy to train the mobs, for the simple reasons that they have no mind, no pre-meditation. They act in frenzy. They repent quickly.' He was not hesitant to characterise demonstrations during the first phase of the Non-Cooperation Movement as 'a mob without a mind' (Gandhi 1920, in 1971e: 240–44). Hence, he concluded that such demonstrations:

> ... cannot … procure *swaraj* for India unless disciplined and harnessed for national goal. The great task before the nation today [urged Gandhi] is to discipline its demonstrations if they are to serve any useful purpose.… The nation must be disciplined to handle mass movements in a sober and methodical manner.… We can do no effective work [he further added] unless we can pass instructions to the crowd and expect implicit obedience. (ibid.)

So, to involve the masses in meaningful political campaigns, one had to articulate *satyagraha* into specific courses of action, especially its modalities of resistance. This is where *ahimsa* assumes tremendous significance. *Ahimsa* was that specific organisational principle that governed the behaviour of a *satyagrahi*. In other words, *ahimsa* was critical to the entire exercise of *satyagraha*, without which the very act of resistance would appear to be futile. *Ahimsa* was a foundational principle as well. Not only did it articulate the nature of the campaign, it would also structure the form of resistance by guiding those involved in it. This was indeed 'the science of non-violence' in the sense that it provided a grammar of Gandhian political mobilisation in which 'civil resisters represent the non-violent army of the nation. And just as every citizen cannot be a soldier on the active list, every citizen cannot be a civil resister

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on the active list' (Gandhi 1933a, in 1975a: 299). Interestingly, the onus of strictly adhering to the science of non-violence rested with the leadership and not with the masses. Just like a soldier of an army:

> ... who does not know the whole of the military science; so also does a *satyagrahi* not know the whole of *satyagraha*. It is enough if he trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready to suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy.... [The *satyagrahi*s] must render heart discipline to their commander. There should be no mental reservation. (Gandhi 1975b: 436–37)

Here Gandhi was referring to mass civil disobedience where the role of the leader was immensely important in guiding the masses whereas in individual civil resistance 'everyone was a complete independent unit [and] every resister is his own leader' (Gandhi 1933b, in 1975c: 428).

Satyagraha was not, therefore, identical to passive resistance. While identifying the features of *satyagraha* in his *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi was of the opinion that passive resistance 'fails to convey [what he meant]. It describes a method, but gives no hint of the system of which it is only a part. Real beauty, and that is my aim, is in doing good against evil' (Doke 1909: 135). In other words, the similarity between *satyagraha* and passive resistance was just peripheral since both of them were clearly defined methods of political resistance which were opposed to violence. Gandhi may certainly have drawn on passive resistance conceptually, but when he defined *satyagraha* he underlined its unique nature and characteristics. As he elaborated in *Hind Swaraj*,

> ...passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If, by using violence, I force the government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law, and accept penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self. (Parel 1997: 90)

As shown, passive resistance can never be equated with *satyagraha* for the simple reason, as Gandhi himself stated, that it

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involved application of force as well, while in the latter, the application of force, of whatever variety, was completely ruled out. Hence, he was most categorical by saying that:

> ... passive resistance is an all-sided sword; it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood, it produced far-reaching results. It never rusts, and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of passive resistance does not require a scabbard. It is strange indeed that you should consider such a weapon to be a weapon merely of the weak. (Parel 1997: 94)

Satyagraha was not 'physical force' but 'soul-force' that drew on the spontaneous sacrifice of self by the participants, which, according to Gandhi, constituted the core of his campaign. Gandhi associated passive resistance with internal violence. It unleashed 'forces of prejudice and separatism rather than compassion and inclusiveness' (Dalton 2000: 74). While emphasising this dimension, he further argued,

> ...everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a course that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim to be absolutely in the right, or that a particular thing is wrong, because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is, therefore, [meant] that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequences whatever it may be. This is the key to use soul-force. (Parel 1997: 91)

Unlike the participants in the Suffragette Movement, 'a *satyagrahi* does not inflict pain on the adversary; he does not seek his destruction'. A *satyagrahi* never 'resorts to firearms'. In the use of *satyagraha*, 'there is no ill-will whatever'. The insistence on Truth 'arms the votary with matchless power [and] power' that constituted the core of *satyagraha*. This power/force 'can never be physical'. There was no room 'for violence'. The only force of universal application 'can be that of *ahimsa* or love', which Gandhi defined as 'soul-force' (1930, reproduced in Mukherjee 1993: 157–60). The test of love was '*tapasya*', or self-suffering. Suffering

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injury in one's person 'is … of the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others' (Bondurant 1958: 27). Self suffering for Truth was not 'a weapon of the weak', but a powerful device, based on a higher form of courage than that resorting to violence. And, it was also an aid 'in the moral persuasion of one's opponents or oppressor' (Pantham 1987: 303).

Gandhi's *satyagraha* was not only a political doctrine directed against the state, it had also social and economic thrusts relevant to and drawn on human nature. In contrast with the constitutional and Extremist methods of political mobilisation, *satyagraha* was a highly original and creative conceptualisation of social change and political action. Opposed to violence, Gandhi's preferred way was *ahimsa* that drew on the strength of persuasion. Once persuasion failed, Gandhi was not hesitant to adopt fasting that was a slightly stronger means in the sense that it affected the opponents by moral blackmailing. The principles governing *satyagraha* and its participants are illustrative of his endeavour to organise mass protest within a strict format that clearly stipulates the duties and responsibilities of an individual *satyagrahi*. So, not only did he creatively define the nature of the struggle for freedom, he also provided a well-designed structure for political mobilisation. In the narrow sense, *satyagraha* was strictly a method of political struggle, drawn on moral reasoning; in the wider sense, this was an extremely humane and creative way of dealing with disagreements and conflicts involving the ruler and the ruled, and also the socio-economically disprivileged and their *bête noire*. What is most distinct in Gandhi's conceptualisation was the importance of rational discussion and persuasion, and also their obvious limitation in radically altering the existing moral relationships between individuals in different socio-economic locations. Hence, *satyagraha* was to be a continuous process seeking to transform the individuals by appreciating the humane moral values that remained captive due to colonialism and various social prejudices, and justified in the name of religion.

CONCEPTUALISING *SWARAJ*

As an idea and a strategy, *swaraj* gained remarkably in the context of the nationalist articulation of the freedom struggle and the growing

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democratisation of the political processes that already brought in hitherto socio-politically marginal sections of society. So, *swaraj* was a great leveller in the sense that it helped mobilise people despite obvious socio-economic and cultural differences. This is what lay at the success of *swaraj* as a political strategy. Underlining its role in a highly divided society like India, *swaraj* was defined in the following ways: (*a*) national independence; (*b*) political freedom of the individual; (*c*) economic freedom of the individual; and (*d*) spiritual freedom of the individual or self rule. Although these four definitions are about four different characteristics of *swaraj*, they are nonetheless complementary to each other. Of these, the first three are negative in character while the fourth one is positive in its connotation. *Swaraj* as 'national independence', individual 'political' and 'economic' freedom involves discontinuity of alien rule, absence of exploitation by individuals and poverty, respectively. Spiritual freedom is positive in character in the sense that it is a state of being which everyone aspires to actualise once the first three conditions are met. In other words, there is an implicit assumption that self rule is conditional on the absence of the clearly defined negative factors that stood in the way of realising *swaraj* in its undiluted moral sense. Even in his conceptualisation, Gandhi preferred the term *swaraj* to its English translation, presumably because of the difficulty in getting the exact synonym in another language.[5] While elaborating on *swaraj*, the Mahatma linked it with *swadeshi* in which his theory of *swaraj* was articulated. In other words, if *swaraj* was a foundational theory of Gandhi's social and political thought, *swadeshi* was the empirical demonstration of those relevant social, economic and political steps for a society, different from what existed.

As evident, *swaraj* was not merely political liberation; it broadly meant human emancipation as well. Although the Moderates were pioneers in conceptualising the idea in its probably most restricted sense, *swaraj* was most creatively devised by the Mahatma who never restricted its meaning to mere political freedom from alien rule. In his words, 'mere withdrawal of the English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny, [that] he is his own legislator through his own representatives' (Gandhi 1975d: 469).

Political freedom is the second important characteristic of *swaraj*. For the Moderates, political freedom meant autonomy within

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the overall control of the British administration. Even the most militant of the moderates like Surendranath Banerji, always supported constitutional means to secure political rights for Indians within the constitutional framework of British India. Unlike the Moderates, the Extremists did not care much about the methods and insisted on complete independence, which meant a complete withdrawal of the British government from India. Although both these positions were qualitatively different, *swaraj* was identified simply by its narrow connotation of political freedom glossing over its wider dimension that Gandhi always highlighted. While the pre-Gandhian nationalists insisted on political freedom which was possible only after the withdrawal of the British rule, for Gandhi, freedom from various kinds of atrocities, justified in the name of primordial social values was as important as freedom from colonialism.

Economic freedom of the individual is the third dimension of *swaraj*. Given the inherent exploitative nature of colonialism, poverty of the colonised is inevitable. For the Moderates, including Gokhale and Naoroji, with the guarantee of constitutional autonomy to India, poverty was likely to disappear because Britain, the emerging industrial power, was expected to develop India's productive forces through the introduction of modern science and technology and capitalist economic organisation. Soon they were disillusioned as India's economic development did not match with what they had expected of the British rule. Instead, Indians were languishing in poverty despite 'a free flow of foreign capital' in India. The essence of nineteenth century colonialism, the Moderate leaders therefore argued, 'lay in the transformation of India into a supplier of food stuff and raw materials to the metropolis, a market for the metropolitan manufacturers and a field for the investment of British capital' (Chandra et al. 1988: 92).

For Gandhi, India's economic future lay in *charkha* (spinning wheel) and *khadi* (homespun cotton textile). 'If India's villages are to live and prosper, the *charkha* must become universal.'[6] Rural civilisation, argued Gandhi, 'is impossible without the *charkha* and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts.'[7] Similarly,

> [*Khadi*] is the only true economic proposition in terms of the millions of villagers until such time, if ever, when a better system of supplying work and adequate wages for every able-bodied person above the

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> age of sixteen, male or female, is found for his field, cottage or even factory in every village of India. (Gandhi 1936a, in 1975f: 77–78)

Since mechanisation was 'an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India, [he recommended] that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanisation but it lied through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed' (Gandhi 1934, in 1975g: 356). He, therefore, suggested that:

> ... an intelligent plan will find the cottage method fit into the scheme for our country. Any planning in our country that ignores the absorption of labour wealth will be misplaced.... [T]he centralised method of production, whatever may be its capacity to produce, is incapable of finding employment for as large a number of persons as we have to provide for. Therefore, it stands condemned in this country. (Gandhi 1939, in 1975e: 74)

Gandhi was thoroughly convinced that industrialisation as it manifested in the West was simply devastating for India. His alternative revolves around his concern for providing profitable employment to all those who are capable. Not only does industrialism undermine the foundation of India's village economy, it 'will also lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in' (Gandhi 1936b, in 1975f: 241).[8] Critical of Jawaharlal Nehru's passion for industrialisation as the most viable way of instantly improving India's economy, he reiterated his position with characteristic firmness by saying that 'no amount of socialisation can eradicate ... the evils, inherent in industrialism' (Gandhi 1940b, in 1975h: 29–30). His target was a particular type of mindset, seduced by the glitter of industrialism, defending at any cost industrialisation of the country on a mass scale. His support for traditional crafts was not based on conservative reasoning, but on solid economic grounds in the sense that by way of critiquing the Western civilisation, he had articulated an alternative model of economic development that was suited to the Indian reality.

Fourth, self rule is probably a unique dimension of *swaraj* indicating its qualitative difference with political freedom. As a concept, it denotes a process of removing the internal obstacles

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to freedom. Unlike the first three characteristics where *swaraj* is conceptualised in a negative way, self rule as an important ingredient clearly indicates the importance of moral values which are relative to society. One may argue that removal of colonial rule would automatically guarantee economic and political freedom. This is hardly applicable to the fourth dimension of *swaraj*, namely, self rule, presumably because it is 'a self-achieved state of affairs' rather than something 'granted' by others.

Gandhian idea of *swaraj* as self rule seems to be based on the philosophical notion of *advaita* which is 'etymologically the kingdom or order or dispensation of "*sva*", self, myself [or] the truth that you and I are not other than one another' (Ramchandra Gandhi 1984: 461). So, the Gandhian struggle for *swaraj* and, indeed, the Indian struggle for *swaraj* under the leadership of thinkers and revolutionaries rooted in Indian metaphysics and spirituality such as Tilak and Aurobindo was 'always implicitly an *advaitian* struggle, a struggle for the kingdom of self or autonomy and identity as opposed to the delusion and chaos and dishonour, heteronomy and divisiveness' (ibid.). The British rule or modern industrial civilisation was simply unacceptable because it was a symbol of power of illusion of not-self, otherness, to be precise, *maya*, hindering the effort 'to see God face to face in the truth of self-realisation' (ibid.: 462).

Characterising *swaraj* in its widest possible connotations and not merely self determination in politics, Gandhi also sought to articulate *swaraj* in ideas. Political domination over man by man is felt in the most tangible form in the political sphere and can easily be replaced. Political subjection primarily means restraint on the outer life of a people, but the subtler domination exercised in the sphere of ideas by one culture over another, a domination all the more serious in the consequence, continues to remain relevant even after the overthrow of a political regime. So, to attain self rule in its purest sense involves a challenge to cultural subjection, perpetrated by those who are colonised, as well. Gandhi's definition of *swaraj* as a self-transformative device is also an attempt to thwart this well-designed colonial endeavour of cultural subjection that was likely to survive even after the conclusion of the alien rule due probably to the uncritical acceptance of colonial modernity. Cultural subjection is different from assimilation in the sense that it leads to 'a creative process of intercommunication between

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separate cultures without blindly superseding one's traditional cast of ideas and sentiments' (Bhattacharya 1984: 385–86). So, *swaraj*, if understood in its narrow conceptualisation, is reduced to a mere political programme ignoring its wider implications, whereby the very foundation of cultural subjection is challenged.

Gandhi was also aware that inner freedom cannot be realised without a conducive socio-political environment. Hence, there was need for the removal of British rule that would ensure both political and economic freedom. In other words, while a conducive environment was basic to freedom, it needed to be created and maintained by appropriate political and economic activities. The ability to act well in the socio-economic and political arena is 'the test of the new meaning of self rule [that] prepares one to lead the life of an active citizen. That is why in [Gandhi's] view, spiritual freedom cannot remain an asocial [neither] and apolitical nor an atemporal condition' (Parel 2000: 17). *Swaraj* in Gandhian conceptualisation invariably translates into, argues Fred Dallmayr (2000: 111), 'the self rule of a larger community, that is, into a synonym for national democratic self government or home rule.' As an empirical construct relevant to a political community, *swaraj* is also closely linked with the idea of *swadeshi* and the cultivation of indigenous (material and spiritual) resources of development. The *swaraj*-based polity comprised small, cultured, well-organised, thoroughly regenerated and self-governing village communities. They would administer justice, maintain order and take important decisions, and would thus not merely be administrative but also powerful economic and political units. In view of its given texture, they would have, argues Bhikhu Parekh (1997: 81) while interpreting Gandhi's swaraj-based polity, 'given a strong sense of solidarity, provided a sense of community, and acted as nurseries of civil virtue.'

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Gandhi was not a theorist but he had theories. His comments on contemporary social, economic and political issues were couched in liberal terms whereby individuals were privileged over the collectivity. Rejecting the collectivist theory of both state and society, Gandhi argued that only an individual could exercise conscience and, therefore, morality. His critique of modernity drew on

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this assumption. By challenging the inevitability and intractability of modernity, he upheld the idea that 'this mindless modernity' can be non-violently resisted. He tempered his criticism by contextualising modernity 'within a cosmological framework that guards individual autonomy' (Tarchek 2000: 231). The Gandhian formulation thus underlined the inescapably unique *swabhava* (instinct behaviour) and different ways in which individuals defined and led the good life. Each individual had a distinct identity and was rooted in a specific cultural tradition. Hence, not only was the past important in his construction, he also defended the local traditions where individuals lived and worked with purpose and dignity. Unlike the Enlightenment conceptions of individualism, which separate individuals from their tradition and *vice versa*, Gandhi provided a theory of autonomy of individuals, designed to empower individuals within their traditions and community. By homogenising individuals and ignoring their diversity, western rationalism, defined as part of modernity, tended to gloss over the diverse nature of human beings due to their socio-economic and cultural roots. Rationalism was inherently hierarchical and missionary, and 'had a deep imperialist orientation' (Parekh 1997: 68) that was articulated in South Africa and India where the rulers justified their atrocious rule in the name of rationality. What was creative in his response was the idea that although western modernity was unavoidable in a colonial context, it needed to be reinvented by taking into account the specificities of the immediate context of the Indian reality. In this sense, Gandhi sought to fill in some gaps in our conceptualisation of modernity. He did so by continually applying ethical standards to contemporary practices and institutions. For him, the modern tendency to define and judge human beings in terms of economic criteria 'reduces [them] to means, and with such an outlook, talk about their dignity is futile' (Tarchek 2000). The most striking feature of Gandhism was a seriously argued case against modernity that was believed to have unleashed processes embodying progress, reason and liberation. While being critical of this assumption appreciating modernity without qualification, Gandhi also carved a space for alternative practices, which were distinctly local or relevant to specific contexts that could never be ignored without costly consequences. For instance, his idea of *panchayati raj* remained a distant dream till very recently, but his arguments for people's participation in

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governance provoked and also consolidated movements for what is euphorically suggested as 'deepening of democracy' in India. His critique, therefore, laid the foundation of a theoretically meaningful concept of democracy in a large polity, and at the same time, he had also demonstrated the dangers of concentration of power and the need for its devolution through a process of mass participation.

NOTES

1. According to Parekh, Gandhi's definition of *ahimsa* as active and energetic love leading to dedicated service to fellow men represented a radical departure from Indian traditions.
2. Gandhi's letter in *Modern Review*, October 1916, reproduced in Iyer (1973: 179–80).
3. Gandhi (1940a) defined *ahimsa* as 'infinite love' while elaborating the role of women in nationalism.
4. Gandhi (1971a: 523) further stated, '[w]e can … free ourselves of the unjust rule of the Government by defying the unjust rule and accepting the punishment that go with it. We do not bear malice towards the Government. When we set its fears at rest … they will at once be subdued to our will.'
5. Gandhi defined *swaraj* as separate from 'freedom' and 'independence' which he claimed 'were English words lacking such connotations and which could be taken to mean a license to do whatever once wishes.' His Swaraj 'allowed no such irresponsible freedom and demanded rather a rigorous moulding of the self and a heavy sense of responsibility' (Hardiman 2003: 26).
6. *Harijan*, 4 November 1939, in Gandhi (1975e: 316).
7. Ibid.
8. He made this point in his discussion with Maurice Frydman, a Polish engineer who was interested in village reconstruction movement, had met Gandhi earlier. He was given the name Bharatanand by Gandhi.

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4 Rabindranath Tagore

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To examine the main strands of the political thought of Tagore.
- To illustrate the uniqueness of Tagore's understanding of the concept of nationalism.
- To bring out the critical elements of the debate between Tagore and Gandhi.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was not a political thinker in the strict sense of the term. Basically a literary figure having profound interest in the spheres of music, painting, poetry and related branches of literary creations, his social and political thoughts appeared to be the product of his insightful grasp of the burning issues of his times. To put it differently, the social and political ideas of Tagore did not seem to have come by way of any well-thought out long term perspective or theorisation on his part. His fundamental passion throughout his life remained confined to the spheres of classical art. Yet, being a vigilant and essentially cosmopolitan figure in Indian society, he came across a number of events, circumstances and ideas on which, intuitively, he found himself compelled to articulate his views to express his vision on such subjects. Therefore, Tagore turns out to be an unconventional thinker. But despite remaining at the periphery of the mainstream of Indian political thought, he exerted so much influence on certain aspects of the social and political vision of the country that a useful discourse on the subject would probably remain incomplete without insightfully and critically incorporating the views of Tagore on them. The chapter, therefore, seeks to provide a critical survey of the main strands of the social and political thought of the great poet.

A LIFE IN CREATIVE UNITY[1]

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May 1861 in an affluent family in Calcutta, presumably affording him a congenial ambience for the development of his creative faculties.[2] Despite the best efforts

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of his father, he could not secure a higher degree in academic pursuits demonstrating his unconventional outlook towards life. His literary pursuits began quite early, running through his penning of the national anthem of the country '*Jana Gana Mana*', culminating in the publication of his anthology of poems *Gitanjali* for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913.

> The creative genius of Rabindranath was almost universal in expression and temper. Literature, music, arts and thoughts, activities, education or the cooperatives, etc., all were touched and turned into gold. Yet the same genius was rooted in our very soil again. India of the ages spoke through him, he was the finest exponent of Vedic lore of composite culture of Hindus, of the universal message of the medieval saints like Kabir, Nanak, etc., right up to Ram Mohan Roy, of the modern times. Whatever is true in our tradition has its voice in Rabindranath. (Sharma 2003)

A significant turning point came in the life of Tagore during the time of the partition of Bengal in 1905. The chorus of vehement protest to this was tremendously strengthened by Tagore, who was:

> ... already Bengal's leading literary figure … who was contributing to patriotism not only through magnificent poems and short stories evoking the beauty of the Bengal countryside and describing the life of its people, but also more directly through attacks on congress mendicancy, repeated calls for *atmasakti* (self-reliance) through *swadeshi* enterprise and national education, and extremely perceptive suggestions for mass contact through *melas, jatras*, and the use of the mother-tongue in both education and political work. (Sarkar 1989: 98).

His urge for constructive non-cooperation policy led to the inauguration of the *Visvabharti* in 1918. Leaving a rich legacy of art and culture, he died on 7 August 1941.

Interestingly, Tagore's innate passion for literature and music was occasionally disrupted by his spontaneous urge to respond to the social and political problems arising from time to time. Thus, bereft of any particular ideological predilection and theoretical pretension, Tagore's intellectual interventions in the discourses on the pressing socio-political issues of the times were presumably in response to the call of his duty as a responsible person on the globe.

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> This is why he invariably got involved in some of the great debates of his time—whether they concerned the boycott of western goods and education, the pristine values of Indian culture, the follies of begging reforms of the British rule, the romantic extremism of young Indian revolutionaries, the hollowness of western materialism, or the curse of aggressive nationalism in all its manifestations. The Poet's passionate involvement in these debates seems to suggest that somehow the trends of contemporary events did not quite square up with the broad worldview he consciously personified. (Chakrabarti 1986: 176–77)

MAIN STRANDS OF THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF TAGORE

Throughout his life, Tagore appeared to be a seeker of eternal truth which, he thought, lay at the heart of every notion, action and pursuit of all the people in the entire universe. Appreciative of the creative unity between thought and action, Tagore did not find any inherent incongruity in the diversity prevalent in the world. What was, bewildering to him, was not the existence of such diversity but the inability of some people to truly grasp the nature of this diversity leading to the spread and consolidation of ideas of parochialism and narrow nationalism amongst them. Naturally, showing his utter disapproval for the idea of revolutionary reform and notion of class divisions amongst the people doing the rounds in the world, he rejected the applicability of such apparently alien ideas to the Indian circumstances (Sen 1947: 26). He, therefore, argued that instead of getting deceptively carried away to narrow conceptualisations of things and actions, the endeavour of humanity ought to seek and discover a creative unity amongst such diversity.

TRUE FREEDOM

Tagore was an exponent of what is called 'true freedom'. At a time when the idea of freedom was being reduced to the level of mere political independence, he had famously declared that 'we must never forget in the present day that those people who have got their political freedom are not necessarily free, they are merely powerful' (cited in Brown 1953: 105). Tagore's conceptualisation of freedom,

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thus, went beyond the realm of political independence for a country and involved the existence of propitious conditions in society through which an individual may be able to take himself near to what he calls the Supreme Person. In fact, such a conceptualisation of freedom becomes very pertinent in the case of countries whose political independence either remained intact or they regained it. But the political ambience in those countries appeared to be so regimented that people were not able to seek and pursue the different ways in which they could elevate their personality to the level of perfection. For instance, in many countries of the world, though the attainment of political freedom infused a sense of freedom from alien rule, they do not seem to be really free given the authoritarian nature of the governments ruling in such countries. Thus, although these countries could be politically free and might have also become quite powerful ostensibly due to the independence of political manoeuvrability resting with them, the realisation of true freedom for the people of such countries would not have been possible in the absence of a politically democratic, morally emancipatory and socially egalitarian systems of life for the people.

Tagore, thus, conceptualised the idea of true freedom as going much beyond the domain of political independence to bring about perfection in the human being. He understood freedom in terms of 'complete awakening, in full self-expression' (Prabhu and Kelkar 1961: 64). Rooting his theoretical formulations in the concept of '*Satyam, Shivam, Advaitam*' of the *Mandukya* Upanishad, Tagore regarded the absolute as Supreme Man and intensely believed in the conception of the Supreme Person (Varma 1964: 83). He asserted that the realisation of true freedom lies in man's pursuits in moving towards the realisation of his oneness with the Supreme Man. While seeking his oneness with the Supreme Person, an individual, in turn, seeks his harmonious correlation with the rest of the world. To Tagore, therefore, the context of true freedom could never be some sort of discordant ties of an individual with his fellow individuals. Moreover, Tagore emphasises that the realisation of true freedom does not necessarily and exclusively entail the attainment of just political freedom or any other external factor for that matter. What it needs, above all, is the attitude to life, ordinarily in conjunction with the propitious conditions of life in which an individual aspires to blossom his self to ensure its nearness to the Supreme Person.

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Moreover, such a realisation of true freedom can also not be attained in one shot or quick progression of time. It needs to be a gradual, successive and satisfying experience for the individual seeking the enjoyment of his moral emancipation.

He, therefore, visualised four stages in the realisation of true freedom: realisation of freedom at the individual level and then progressive movement of freedom from the individual to the community, from community to the universe and from universe to infinity (Tagore 1968: 99). Here lies the essence of the Indian perspective of life when an individual gradually merges himself with the infinite incarnation of the Supreme man. The process begins, and once the beginning is flawless, its fructification in final interview with the Supreme Person is almost assured, with the conscious effort on the part of the individual to distance and isolate himself from the material things of life and the worldly perception of the self itself. Tagore claims that such a notion of the enjoyment of true freedom has been a commonplace thing in India. He exemplifies that such a conception of true freedom is effortlessly perceptible to a simple villager of the country who knows that true freedom lies in 'freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things' (ibid.: 186). Once he is able to isolate himself from his self, his functional sphere gets widened to the level of community as he is no more interested in what is called 'possessive individualism' and looks at things in such a broad perspective that the whole community becomes the object of his contemplation. Subsequently, he breaks himself free even from the bonds of his own community and expands the horizon of his vision and activity as the whole of universe without any discrimination. Finally, he attains his immortality with getting immersed in the infinity from where his personality feels the virtue of true freedom, having no fetters of any sort on the thoughts and actions of the individual. Thus, for Tagore, the realisation of true freedom is dependent on man's ability to free himself from the parochial bonds of worldly enticements and in progressive movement of his personality towards the ultimate abode of infinity.

Tagore, thus, takes the true freedom of individual as the framework within which the human civilisation evolves and flourishes. He claims that the reflection of the enjoyment of true freedom is

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experienced in all sorts of creativity and originality which an individual contributes to the society. Lying in harmony with other existing objects and ideas of life, the innovative constructions tend to produce a whole new set of ideas, institutions, practices and objects in society which add to the march of the human civilisation towards greater freedom, happiness and satisfaction for the people. Interestingly, while arguing for the progressive and spontaneous creativity on the part of an individual and its automatic harmonious coexistence with other existing things in society, Tagore was against any unquestioned conformity with the existing things and notions. He argued that true freedom needed to be reflected in the inherent right of an individual to question the prevalent ideas and objects in society and evolve his own creations in accordance with his understanding of such ideas and objects. Thus, Tagore's conceptualisation of true freedom seeks to simplify the complexities involved in the understanding, sorting and harmoniously adjusting the old and new ideas and objects leading to progressive development in the human civilisation.

The emphasis on creativity of an individual need not be construed as the advocacy of the right for freedom of expression for the people in the society. In fact, Tagore's notion of true freedom happens to be a complex and comprehensive idea going beyond the realm of political freedom only. It, significantly, permeates all the dimensions of human life and seeks to provide an all-encompassing view of freedom in society. For instance, in the societies torn by caste, class, race, ethnic and gender cleavages, the idea of true freedom being enjoyed by the people simply does not arise. Similarly, in traditional societies, where a quite sacrosanct distinction is made between the public and private domains of human life, the realisation of true freedom would be improbable given the tendency on part of the individuals to be moral and genuine in public appearances and doing all sorts of immoral and fake things in their private life. Hence, in Tagore's perception, any kind of duality in the enjoyment and realisation of true freedom would undermine the basic idea of true freedom itself and its purported realisation would not be real.

Tagore, therefore, visualised a morally sound and politically liberated socio-political order for India in which the basic ingredients of his notion of true freedom find their fullest expression affording

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the people a congenial environment to develop their self into the Supreme Man. As he wrote:

> Where the mind is without fear
> and the head is held high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been
> broken up into fragments by narrow
> domestic walls;
> Where words come out from
> the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its
> arms towards perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason
> has not lost its way into the dreary
> desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward by
> thee into ever-widening thought and
> action…
> Into that heaven of freedom, my
> Father, let my country awake.

(Tagore 1979: 13)

NATIONALISM

Like the notion of true freedom, Tagore found the idea of nationalism equally deceptive and counter-productive to the realisation of true freedom by individuals all over the world. Contextualising his analysis on nationalism in the backdrop of the rise of militant and aggressive nationalistic aspirations in certain countries of Europe during first half of the twentieth century, Tagore sought to explain the birth of the idea of nationalism as a product of modern science and technological advancements in that continent. He argued that unlike India where the association of people was for social and moral considerations owing to the innate cultural orientations in the personality of India, in Europe, it seemed a different story altogether. In the wake of rapid advancements in the field of science and technology, the resultant industrial revolution motivated people to join hand together to seemingly maximise the benefits accruing from this invention. He, however, insisted that such mechanical coming together of people without any moral

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or social considerations ingrained dehumanising tendencies in them, as a result of which their nationalism became intimidating and aggressive in nature (Tagore 1950b: 17). Moreover, Tagore argued that the process of evolution of nationalism in Europe for political and economic purposes inherently carried within it the characteristics of morally unacceptable, politically aggressive and economically insatiable form of nationalism whose impact on the world would invariably be inimical to the larger interests of humanity.

Tagore further demonstrated a number of negative repercussions of the rise of militant nationalism in Europe in both domestic as well as international arenas. Within the country, he elaborated, nationalism breeds an intense and unending lust for power and money in the people resulting into more and more devaluation of the dignity of human labour and greater reliance on mechanical power to make quick bucks. Gradually, the social interactions amongst the people start getting bereft of moral and humanistic considerations and one's political and economic power determines his social position irrespective of moral turpitude of his activities. In final analysis, when the lust for power and money takes a concentrated form, it creates an urge for unusual organisation of people to make their forays outside their place to explore and exploit the material resources of that region. Thus, nationalism ordinarily boils down to colonialism and fierce wars between two or more than two nations to secure a strong foothold in lucrative colonies. The true character of nationalism also gets exposed in its activities in the colonies. Drawing examples from British imperialism, Tagore explained the numerous dehumanising and exploitative features of colonialism in India, the most despicable of which happens to be the transformation of the personality of man from being his own to become that of the colonisers. What was alarming to Tagore, therefore, was the seemingly unending march of imperialism in ruining the moral and humanistic character of even the noble souls in the colonies. As he laments, 'It will go on in its ring dance of moral corruption, linking steel unto steel, and machine unto machine, trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and the living ideals of man' (Tagore 1950b: 41).

Despite being very critical of the context of rise and subsequent incarnations of nationalism in the form of imperialism and colonialism, Tagore was appreciative of what he calls the 'spirit of the West'. To Tagore, the spirit of the West was not what the nationalism

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of the West had ordained for the people within and outside the continent of Europe. The spirit of the West, in fact, lies in providing the rest of world the values like freedom, equality, fraternity and remarkable creativity in the field of art and literature. The rise of nationalism, on the other hand, was conditioned by 'the nation of the West' by which Tagore meant an entity least human and least spiritual, as its focus remained centred on expanding the tentacles of nationalism through scourges of war, weapons and violence. Thus, Tagore emphasised the existence of the two seemingly antithetical notions in the forms of the spirit of the West and the nation of the West. What, however, went wrong was the weakening of the ethos and value of spirit and growing predominance of the demon of nation which ultimately led to colonisation of the rest of world by European nationalism.

What was common between Tagore and Gandhi was the idea that nation was absolutely inapplicable to Indian people. Both of them regarded nationalism as a byproduct of the western nation–state system and of the forces of homogenisation let loose by the western worldview. To them, 'a homogenised universalism' (Nandy 1994: x-xi), itself a product of the uprootedness and deculturation brought about by British colonialism in India, struck at the root of Indian civilisation. In contrast with an imported category like nationalism, their alternative was 'a distinctive civilisational concept of universalism embedded in the tolerance encoded in various traditional ways of life in a highly diverse, plural society' (ibid.). This conceptualisation within an absolutely non-nationalist philosophical framework defused the arguments in favour of Hindu nationalism in the context of freedom movement in India. So, not only was this critique of nation and nationalism morally acceptable and politically effective, it also laid the foundation of community-based society drawing on the resources of a civilisation of which it was a part.

The honeymoon was short-lived and differences between the poet and the Mahatma loomed large in course of time. Disapproving of the Gandhian strategic moves in the forms of boycott, non-cooperation and civil disobedience to compel the British to leave India, Tagore castigated the Indian leaders, including Gandhi, for falling prey to the temptations of nationalism by taking unusually discordant steps in their fight for the independence of the country. Tagore's prescription, on the other hand, for the nationalist leaders was to wage a moral and spiritual struggle against the British

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by trying to convince them of the dehumanising, debasing and morally unacceptable nature of their rule in India. He insisted that in India's fight for her independence, the intrinsic values of universal brotherhood and spiritual harmony amongst different people must not be sacrificed. As a firm believer of civilisational unity of India, Tagore thus provided a powerful critique of Indian nationalist movement that tended to gloss over India's well-entrenched diversity to construct a nation.

The strong criticism of certain aspects of the Indian national movement by Tagore put him in an argumentative position with a number of nationalists in the country who were fighting for the cause of her independence. They pointed out the futility of the notion of nationalism advocated by Tagore in case of India on the plea that Indian nationalism was rooted in the consciousness of the people's distinct aspiration of getting independence from the yoke of British colonialism. It had nothing in common with the European nationalism whose basic pursuit lied in maximising the political and economic power of a few people at the expense of the vast mass of humanity within and outside of the Europe. Hence, the national movement in the country was also a move to ensure the resurgence of the spirit of India which could find its fullest manifestation in an independent nation only. The argument of the Indian nationalists extended to the extent of justifying the ultimate goal of Indian nationalism as nothing but ensuring the essential cosmopolitanism in the world as argued for by Tagore. It was contended that such cosmopolitanism could not be attained as long as the 'abstract being, the (British) Nation, is ruling India' (Tagore 1950b: 13). In order to ensure that harmonious coexistence amongst the various people is brought about, the resurgence of the spirit of India and its articulation through the means of Indian independence became an unavoidable necessity. Hence, Tagore's critique of the march of national movement in the country could not be accepted as it did not fit into the conceptualisation of nationalism advanced by most of his colleagues in the nationalist movement. More than a fight against British nationalism, the Indian national movement was an attempt to regain the lost spiritual personality of the Indian nation. Since the fullest articulation of such moral personality of the country could not take place in a state of subjugation of the country, the national movement also aimed at securing the independence of

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the country from the British rule. Its ultimate aim was to contribute to the cosmopolitanism of Tagore.

CRITIQUE OF GANDHI

Tagore and Gandhi happened to be two of the greatest Indians during the twentieth century. Despite having slightly different perspectives on the nature and course of India's national movement, the two stood in deep reverence and appreciation of each other's personality and point of view. In articulating their respective feelings on the essence of one another's life, Tagore called Gandhi '*Mahatma*' while Gandhi called Tagore '*Gurudev*', seemingly subtle euphemisms which appear to have replaced, if not obliterated, the real names of the two great visionaries. However, like the indomitable '*hath yogis*' (seers having intense stubbornness in their postures) having the courage of conviction to express their opinions irrespective of their reception by others, the two took markedly divergent views of the nature and context of the Indian national movement resulting into an interesting and meaningful debate between the two (see Prabhu and Kelkar 1961). The value of the exposition of this debate lies in putting the views of Tagore and Gandhi in perspective, and sharpening the understanding of the positions held by the two philosophers.

Being a spiritualist theoretician and an advocate of cosmopolitanism, Tagore was pained at the direction the Indian national movement was taking under the leadership of Gandhi during 1920s, as he apparently discovered the predominance of parochial nationalism, traditional egoism and instrumentalist anarchism in it. His failure to appreciate the inherent spiritualism and moral force in the methods and strategies of the national movement led him to criticise it as restrictively confining the fight to *swaraj* only, which Tagore seemingly understood as seeking nothing more than political freedom. This, Tagore argued, was a reflection of the aggressive nationalism shorn of spiritual and moral personality of India. However, Gandhi was quick to rebut such impressions in the mind of the poet by arguing that the course of national movement was unmistakably non-violent and moral in as much as it was an assertion of the desire of the Indian masses that they are no more ready to remain under the subjugation of the British. He

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emphatically pointed that 'non-cooperation with Evil is as much a duty as cooperation with Good' (Prabhu and Kelkar 1961: 39). To Gandhi, the personality of India never bestowed honours on political or economic power and, hence, the idea of *swaraj* would be as much moral and spiritual awakening of the country as it would be the attainment of freedom from the bonds of British colonialism.

The basic force of Tagore's arguments against Gandhian programmes lay in his locating the problems of India within the framework of its social and moral awakening which would result in the realisation of political independence in due course of time. Tagore's firm conviction in the value of harmonious coexistence of different people made him emphasise the long term perspective of the Indian national movement by arguing for revitalising the basic foundational characteristics of the Indian ethos and culture in terms of moral values of the Indian society. For instance, his participation in the anti-partition movement in Bengal in 1905 left him a distraught person as he could not understand the logic of burning of clothes and boycott of foreign goods. He stated that such actions reflected the pursuit for gaining political and economic power for the urban middle class at the total neglect of articulating India's moral superiority over the British. Hence, Tagore asked for a reassertion of India's rationality in defeating the brute force of the British by moral uprightness and harmonious social interaction with the others. He exhorted Gandhi to have faith in reason and be the medium of impressing on the British the virtues of moral force with which Indian cultural heritage remained afloat and which would eventually compel the British to leave India as well. However, Gandhi's response to Tagore's viewpoints was enmeshed in his desperation to seek solution to the immediate needs of the country. He emphatically stated that,

> ... a drowning man cannot save others. We must try to save ourselves. Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian. India must learn to live before she can aspire to die for humanity. The mice which helplessly find themselves between the cat's teeth acquire no merit from their enforced sacrifice. (Prabhu and Kelkar 1961: 43)

Gandhian methods of bringing the economic and social turnaround of the country also did not amuse Tagore who saw in

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them Gandhi's inability to grasp and resolve the basic issues in the economic and social problems facing the country. Tagore, for instance, was sceptical of the Gandhian move of popularising the '*charkha*' (the spinning wheel) as the basic instrument of ameliorating the economic conditions of the people. He instead suggested the initiation of constructive programmes such as cooperative farming which carried the potential of at least saving people from abject poverty and starvation. Similarly, Tagore was very critical of Gandhi's defence of the traditional notion of *varnashram* as the ideal method of bringing about functional differentiation in society. Tagore argued that by getting perverted into caste system, the *varnashram* system not only no more remained a scientific method of functional differentiation of society but also turned out to be an instrument of exclusion and caste-based discrimination in society. Gandhi, however, stuck to his points by emphasising the differences in the context and outlook of the two which inevitably presented the divergence of opinion between the two, though, in final analysis, the two of them stood in unity rather than in disunity with each other. As Gandhi wrote:

> ...the poet lives in a magnificent world of his own creation—his world of ideas. I am a slave of somebody else's creation—the spinning wheel. The poet makes his *gopi*s dance to the tune of his flute. I wander after my beloved Sita, the charkha, and seek to deliver her from the ten-headed monster from Japan, Manchester, Paris, etc. The poet is an inventor, he creates, destroys and recreates. I am an explorer and having discovered a thing I must cling to it. The poet presents the world with new and attractive things for day to day. I can merely show the hidden possibilities of old and even worn out things. The world easily finds an honourable place for the magician who produces new and dazzling things. I have to struggle laboriously to find a corner for my worn out things…. I may say in all humility that we complement each other's activity. (Prabhu and Kelkar 1961: 109)

The essence of Tagore's critique of Gandhian policies, programmes, viewpoints and techniques appears to lie in the differing contexts and perspectives on the urgency of things for India in both short and long run. In other words, barring a few irreconcilable disagreements as, for instance, on the issues of *charkha* and system of *varnashram*, the two thinkers appear to be arguing for the things

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which did not remain seemingly opposed to each other for ever, and went on to supplement each other in the ultimate analysis. For instance, Tagore's insistence on moral and spiritual awakening of India in place of waging formidable political movements differed from the views of Gandhi only in so far as the latter argued for the political independence as a pre-condition for the moral and spiritual awakening of the country. Thus, the Tagore–Gandhi debate was revealing, on the one hand, of the difference of perceptions between the two great thinkers on the content and short term perspective on the national movement of the country and their inherent complementarities in so far as the eventual comprehensive advancement of the country was concerned, on the other.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Tagore was the poet–philosopher of the country having his own distinct set of ideas and beliefs on the various problems and issues facing the country during the early decades of the twentieth century. The uniqueness of the political thought of Tagore appears to be the metaphysical foundations of his contemplations which led him to think more in terms of moral and spiritual awakening of the country, instead of focussing on the need for political independence, as was being argued by the majority of the national leaders. Moreover, his conceptualisations, though rooted in the moral and spiritual framework of Indian philosophy, had wider practical implications as he tried to develop a cosmopolitan perspective of life in India. For instance, his views on freedom and nationalism seem to have international ramifications as he evaluated the practice of these values in various parts of the world and provided an eloquent critique of the parochial, aggressive and superficial understanding of such ideas. Thus, Tagore turns out to be the Indian spokesman for the cause of cosmopolitanism in the world.

NOTES

1. The basic essence of the life and works of Tagore seems to be his untiring quest for inherent unity amongst seeming diversity of facts. To him, truth, the fundamental force of life, lies not in facts but in harmony of facts (see Tagore 1950a: 32).

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2. The blossoming of Tagore's literary mind was seemingly facilitated by the publication of his poems in his family journal *Bharti*.

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5 B.R. Ambedkar

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To elaborate Ambedkar's ideas on caste and untouchability with special reference to his 'Annihilation of Caste'.
- To explore the underlying arguments of the debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi.
- To understand the main strands of the political thought of Ambedkar.

Amongst the galaxy of thinkers in modern India, Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956) stands on a pedestal quite different from others for a variety of reasons. First, very profoundly, his personality exemplifies the unique saga of an untouchable being able to fight the massive social disabilities by sheer formidable courage and never-say-die attitude to life to become 'an eminent constitutionalist, distinguished parliamentarian, scholar and jurist, and, above all, the leader of the Depressed Classes' (Appadorai 2002: 281) at a time, when presumably, just living a seemingly ordinary respectful life for an untouchable appeared extremely difficult, if not impossible, given the hostile and degrading attitude of the upper echelons of the society towards such people. Resultantly, as is being witnessed in various parts of the country, particularly northern India, he is eulogised as 'a most inspiring example of what a man can achieve by his indomitable perseverance and great self-denial, even under the most depressing and destitute circumstances' (Keer 1954: IX–X).

Second, he, in a way, reinvented the entire notion of anti-untouchability and social reform movement not only in Maharashtra but probably the whole of urban India by evolving a flexible, well-reasoned and multi-pronged strategy to argue with and fight against all those who mattered but resisted the struggle of the untouchables to secure a dignified and respectful place in the Indian society. For instance, contrary to the attempts of his predecessors in the history of anti-untouchability movements who seemed to take their movements as a one-shot affair, Ambedkar had the courage of carrying on his movement on a sustained and long term basis, albeit with flexibility, well-reasonedness and suitable change in

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the strategy of the movement with the felt needs of the time. Thus, without losing out on the locus and focus of his movement aimed at securing a respectful and rightful place for the untouchables in the Indian society, he adopted various strategies depending on the dynamics of the time. As Eleanor Zelliot (1986: 162–63), talking about a particular phase of his life, explains succinctly,

> ...until 1935, Ambedkar's work took three directions: the most visibly successful was the awakening and organising of the Untouchables—through newspapers of their own, social and cultural institutes, and widely attended conferences, then called 'Depressed Classes' conferences. He also participated in every opportunity to petition the British government for political representation for Untouchables, and these opportunities were many: the Southborough Committee on Franchise, the Simon Commission to evaluate the reforms and the famous Round Table Conferences at London. Ambedkar also served in the Bombay Legislature to which his efforts had won token representation for the Untouchables. The third direction his work took was that of encouraging education among the lower classes, first by exhortation and founding of hostels so that they could have a place to stay while attending school, and eventually by establishing a still-growing network of colleges under the Peoples Education Society.

Third, recognising him as an innovator of sorts, Ambedkar may arguably be credited with reconceptualising the whole notion of emancipation of untouchables in India by broadening the horizons of the concept of emancipation of untouchables to include within its ambit certain other critical aspects of empowerment which remained largely, if not totally, out of its ambit till date. For instance, before the arrival of Ambedkar on the scene, the idea of emancipation of untouchables remained confined to the domains of the social and religious reforms being championed by various reform organisations. As pointed out by Desai (1976: 265), indeed, 'the removal of untouchability and all disabilities from which the depressed classes suffered, formed an important item in the programmes of all socio-reform and religio-reform movements that sprang up in India during the British rule.' What is, however, noteworthy in this context is the fact that most of such movements conceptualised the notion of emancipation of untouchables in a narrow sense of reforming the social and religious moorings of the Hindu socio-religious order. But when Ambedkar set on to visualise

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the portents of emancipation of untouchables, he was quick enough to include the idea of appropriate representation of untouchables in the political bodies as well as the services of government in order to afford an irreversible position of substance to the untouchables in the socio-political dispensation of the country. Thus, with Ambedkar having taken over the mantle of being the leader of the untouchables in the country, the notion of emancipation of the untouchables underwent a subtle transformation to include sufficient representation of the depressed classes in the politico-legislative bodies and the services of the government, besides eradication of all other socio-religious disabilities of these people (see, for details, Rodrigues 2004: 368–81).

Thus, keeping these factors in mind, an attempt at analysing the major strands of social and political thought of Ambedkar makes a quite interesting enterprise. However, what is of paramount significance in critically articulating the major strands of social and political thought of Ambedkar is the contextualised conceptualisation of his ideas. Quite evidently, though the basic characteristic of the articulation of the thought of various thinkers in the book is rooting of the thought in the particular context in which it evolved and took concrete and refined shape, the element of dialectics between the context and the thought seems more profound in Ambedkar than probably any other thinker. This is so precisely for the reason that in Ambedkar, the thought process appeared to be the product of his first-hand experiences in being a victim of the curse of untouchability and his subsequent activism in waging a relentless battle for securing the social and political rights of the untouchables, which has not been the fact, say, in case of Gandhi. As a matter of fact, for instance, Gandhi penned down his basic theoretical treatise *Hind Swaraj* way back in 1908 much before his political activism became profound in India, though he may be said to have gained some rude shocks of his life in South Africa itself. Yet, what is remarkable in Gandhi is that the scheme of things presented in *Hind Swaraj* in the first decade of the twentieth century remained unchangeable for Gandhi for ever, despite experiencing numerous facets of life during his stewardship of the Indian national movement. The chapter, thus, seeks to provide a contextual interpretation of the social and political thought of Ambedkar as is reflected in his numerous tracts written over a period of time, and his various other activities like leading certain movements,

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setting up numerous organisations and doing a number of things personally with a symbolic message such as adopting Buddhism to show the way for his followers to tread for a better life.

A LIFE FOR THE CAUSE OF UNTOUCHABLES

The life of Ambedkar seems to be a life of perpetual struggle anecdoted in between with certain constructive interventions such as writing books and monographs or being instrumental in drafting the constitution for free India. What, however, appears to be the running theme underpinning almost all aspects during all the times of his life is his self-felt pain and tireless urge to secure for him and the members of the depressed classes an emancipation from the curse of drudgery and untouchability right from his childhood. This is not to argue that no other person before Ambedkar felt the pain of—and aspired for freedom from—such inhuman things. The point is that 'Ambedkar's realisation of his own condition was all the more stark as he was a child blessed with a sharp mind' (Jaffrelot 2005: 3) and his reaction to such realisation seems more forthcoming, consistent and sustainable.

Born in an untouchable Mahar family on 14 April 1891 at Mhow, near Indore, Ambedkar seemed destined to face the indignities and discrimination in his life right from his childhood ostensibly due to his constant exposure to public places like schools. As a pampered child of his family, he seemed to have remained immune from the social disabilities for some time as his parents sent him to the local Marathi School where caste discriminations did not appear to be very pronounced. However, Ambedkar faced the curse of untouchability when he moved out of the relatively restricted and particular circumstances of a cantonment area. Upon his arrival in Bombay, he joined the Elphinstone High School and was able to secure his graduation degree from the Elphinstone College by availing a scholarship. Subsequently, on another scholarship, he went to the United States, a first of its kind for an untouchable, to earn a masters degree from Columbia University in New York. Afterwards, he arrived in London to pursue law at Grays Inn followed by his joining the London School of Economics for further studies. Ambedkar had to return to India in 1917 on the expiry of his scholarship from London and started his public life in India which

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essentially remained centred around the ideas of establishing himself as a professional on the one hand, and seeking to safeguard the interests of the untouchables, on the other. For instance, in 1919, he was called upon to depose before the Southborough Committee which was set up to suggest amendments in the qualification criteria for voting rights. At this time, Ambedkar tried hard for securing separate electorate and reserved seats for the untouchables. His brief stint in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda proved frustrating and he returned to Bombay where he was appointed Professor of Political Economy at the Sydenham College. However, the indignities of being an untouchable did not spare him here also and he left the job in 1920 to start the publication of a weekly paper *Mooknayak* (Leader of the Dumb) to propagate the interests of the depressed classes who remained without a say. But soon, he left for London to do his masters in Economics. In 1923, after his return to India, he tried to establish himself as a successful lawyer but could not do so, partly for his untouchable status. Consequently, he set on to work full time for the cause of the freedom of the untouchables from the atrocities of age-old social customs, securing a respectable and equal place for the untouchables in the Indian social order and guaranteeing the due share to the depressed classes in the political institutions and public services of the government. Hence, he set up the *Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha* (Association for the Welfare of the Untouchables) in 1924 to toil for the educational and economic well-being of the untouchables and also started the paper *Bahishkrit Bharat* in 1927 to air the grievances of these people.

Taking his own initiatives in redressing the grievances of the untouchables, Ambedkar organised the Mahad *satyagraha* in 1927 for emphasising the right of the untouchables to use the wells and tanks like others. The ensuing confrontation with caste Hindus led him to publicly burn the *Manusmriti* to express the indignation of the untouchables for the scriptures sanctioning the discrimination against them. He also founded the organisations like *Samaj Samata Sangh* and *Samata Sainik* Dal in 1927 to fight for the cause of emancipation of the untouchables. In the same year, he was appointed as a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly apparently in recognition of his growing stature of being the leader of the depressed classes. Later, he deposed before the Simon Commission in 1928 articulating a radical perspective on the aspirations of the depressed classes from the future constitutional framework being evolved by the colonial government.

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During 1930s, Ambedkar's strategy of emancipation of the untouchables started getting more inclined towards legal–constitutional methods in comparison to the radical methods of organising *satyagraha*. Barring the Kalaram temple entry movement in 1930, Ambedkar's focus of attention now turned to securing more and more separate places and positions for the untouchables in the constitutional framework being worked out by the British government. His participation in the various Round Table Conferences strengthened his resolve to secure a separate electorate for the untouchables. Hence, when the Communal Award was announced in 1932, it appeared as some sort of fruition of the efforts of Ambedkar for the emancipation of untouchables. However, Gandhi's epic fast unto death against the separate electorate for the untouchables led to the signing of the Poona Pact, the core of which was to have a joint electorate with reservation of seats for the depressed classes. This seemingly compulsive Pact did not appear to have satisfied Ambedkar as he was convinced that '[T]he Communal Award was intended to free the Untouchables from the thraldom of the Hindus. The Poona Pact is designed to place them under the domination of the Hindus' (Moon 1989: 355).

In the aftermath of the Poona Pact, the situation of Ambedkar appeared dilemmatic in the sense that while retaining his hope in the ability of constitutional means to bring about substantive transformations in the life of the untouchables, he no more remained sure of the potentiality of the Hindu religion to reform itself and afford the respectful place to the untouchables within its fold. Given this dilemma, in subsequent years, therefore, Ambedkar seemed to be contemplating on giving up Hinduism though he retained his vigorous pursuits in safeguarding the interests of the untouchables through constitutional means. An important event of this time was the preparation of a lecture called the 'Annihilation of Caste' in 1936 to be delivered at the annual conference of *Jat-Pat Todak Mandal* of Lahore. Though the lecture could not be delivered due to the cancellation of the conference owing to the stinging indictment of Hinduism in his lecture which was printed beforehand, it turned out to be one of the most influential works produced by Ambedkar.

With an increase in constitutional activities in the country and growing participation of the Indians in the government machinery during the 1940s, Ambedkar's time and energy appeared to be

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consumed by them. He held a number of posts in the colonial administration and participated in various statutory commissions set up to devise a constitutional framework for independent India. After being elected to the Constitutional Assembly from Bengal, he eventually became the Chairman of the Drafting Committee which drafted the Constitution of free India. However, during this time, his intellectual faculties seemed remarkably productive as a number of outstanding academic works of Ambedkar were produced in this period. In post-independent times, he became the Law Minister in the Cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru but could not continue for long due to his differences with Nehru. Apparently, diverting his attention from the vagaries of active politics, he tried to change the educational landscape for the untouchables by establishing a number of colleges in Maharashtra. At the fag end of life, though he remained a member of the Rajya Sabha, the focus of his activities shifted towards exploring the alternative socio-religious formations in which the untouchables could find a dignified and respectful place for themselves. He, thus, adopted Buddhism in 1956 articulating his utter disappointment from the failure of the Hindu religion to accommodate untouchables within its fold. Finally, succumbing to his continuously failing health, he died on 6 December 1956 at Bombay leaving behind him an enormous and complex body of socio-economic and political thought drawn not only upon the intellectual brilliance of the scholar but also his experiences and activities in wiping out the curse of untouchability from the Indian society.

CASTES AND UNTOUCHABILITY IN HINDU SOCIETY

The social thought of Ambedkar basically revolves around the idea of understanding the dynamics of caste system in India and waging a tireless crusade against the curse of untouchability. Drawn from his own experiences in being subjected to numerous kinds of social indignities and discrimination at various stages and different walks of his life, he was convinced of the purpose of his life for which he remained steadfastly committed. However, the social thought of Ambedkar seems to have graduated from one level of assumptions

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to other owing to the reception of the previous assumption at the hands of the social system dominated by caste Hindus.

> Ambedkar, therefore, oscillated between the promotion of the Untouchables in Hindu society or in the Indian nation as a whole; and the strategy of a break that could take the form of a separate electorate, or of a separate Dalit party and/or of conversion outside Hinduism. He searched for solutions, explored strategies and, in doing so, set the Dalits on the path of an arduous emancipation. (Jaffrelot 2005: 7)

Ambedkar began his painstaking efforts at analysing the dynamics of caste system in India with his first essay on the subject 'Castes in India, Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development' in 1917. He noted that at the outset, the Hindu society composed of classes which from the earliest times existed in the form of the *Brahman*s (the priestly class), the *Kshatriya* (the warrior class), the *Vaishaya*s (the trading class) and the *Shudra*s (the artisans or the menial class). The fundamental characteristic of this system was the scope for graduation of an individual from one particular class to the other, provided he earned the essential qualities of that class. Such a subdivision of the society appeared natural given the diversity in the innate responsibilities to be shouldered by different sets of people. Gradually, however, these subdivisions started losing their open-door character of the class system and became self-closed units called castes. The beginning in this regard seems to have been made by the priestly class at some point in history, thereby detaching itself from the rest of the body of the people and through a closed door policy became a caste by itself. 'The question is: were they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close on their own accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: *Some closed the door, others found it closed against them*' (Rodrigues 2004: 257). Endogamy, thus, emerged to be the mainstay of the caste system which was nothing but an incarnation of a 'closed class' (Ambedkar 1917; Government of Maharashtra 1979: 22).

Trying to understand the Vedic justification for the caste system in his 'Who were the Shudras?' Ambedkar precisely analysed the *Rig Veda* and found a typical explanation of the origin of the caste system in the *Purusha Shukta*. The text explains the origin of the

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caste system from the sacrificial dismemberment of the divine man, the Virat Purusha whose various limbs gave birth to various castes in the following order: 'His mouth became the Brahman/ the Warrior [Kshatriya] was the product of his arms/His thighs were the Artisan [Vaishaya]/From his feet were born the servant [Shudras]' (quoted in Jaffrelot 2005: 34). Ambedkar denounced such an overt justification of graded inequality by the *Purusha Shukta* on the plea that 'no society has an official gradation laid down, fixed and permanent, with an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt' (Ambedkar 1990a: 26).

Along with offering an innovative critique of the Hindu religious scriptures that allowed for a justified standing for caste system in the society, Ambedkar set on to explain the idea of untouchables in his monograph 'The Untouchables: Who were they and why they became Untouchables?' published in 1948. In this context, he evolved the idea of 'Broken Men' to demarcate those who after being defeated in the tribal wars were broken into bits and wandered around in various parts of the land. Such broken men in India, over the years, became the follower of Buddhism given the emphasis of this religion on the equality and dignity of every person in society. However, when, under the pressure of *Brahman*s, the majority of people returned to the fold of Hinduism, the broken men remained the follower of Buddhism, thereby coming into direct retaliatory ploys of the Brahmans. Emphasising on the consequent rooting of animosity between the two, Ambedkar (1990b: 317), thus, points out,

> ...it explains why the Untouchables regard the Brahmins as inauspicious, do not employ them as their priests and do not even allow them to enter into their quarters. It also explains why the Broken Men came to be regarded as Untouchable. The Broken Men hated the Brahmins because the Brahmins were the enemies of Buddhism and the Brahmins imposed untouchability upon the Broken Men because they would not leave Buddhism.

To Ambedkar, this animosity was further magnified by the utter contrast in the food habits of the two, for, while the Brahmans regarded the cow a sacred animal, the Broken Men continued to eat beef which apparently widened the gulf between the two sets of people.

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ANNIHILATION OF CASTE

Annihilation of Caste is one of the foremost monographs published by Ambedkar aimed at explaining the exploitative nature of caste and calling for its annihilation in order to secure a social order based on equal status and dignity for all. As explained earlier, this brilliant peace of thought-provoking write-up was penned as a lecture to be delivered as the Presidential speech at the annual conference of the *Jat-Pat Todak Mandal* of Lahore in 1936 by Ambedkar. But an early printing of this speech went to the unsympathetic eyes of the organisers who could not simply withstand the scathing attack the speech made on the caste system leading to the cancellation of the programme and the speech remained undelivered. Subsequently, it was published in the form of a book in the same year to become 'undoubtedly the best known of all' (Jaffrelot 2005: 32) the books and monographs authored by Ambedkar.

The basic argument of Ambedkar in the *Annihilation of Caste* is that caste system is the debilitating institution of the Indian society which instead of doing any good has wrought irreparable loss to the untouchables and, therefore, needs to be eradicated without any repentance. He begins by exposing the inherent nature of the caste system which has been found to be grounded in false notions of division of labour in conjunction with the gradation of labourers as well. Indefensible on the basis of overtly ridiculous notions like biological purity, caste remains an irrelevant factor in so far as the economic efficiency is concerned. Rather imbued with inherent anti-social spirit, the system of caste has not only gone to exclude the aboriginal tribes from within its fold but also created wedges amongst various sub-caste groups as well. Consequently, the Hindu religion risks the chance of losing its missionary zeal and any sort of efforts at organising the people in the name of it is bound to fail. Thus, to Ambedkar, the caste system has been found to be a blot on the Hindu religion and instead of acting as the fulcrum to hold it in the highest of spirit and impeccable ethics, its cumulative effect on the Hindu society is that of a genie out to destroy it own creator.

As a result, argues Ambedkar (Rodrigues 2004: 275),

> ...the effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public

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> charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's pubic life is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious. There is no charity to the needy. Suffering as such calls for no response. There is charity but it begins with the caste and ends with the caste. There is sympathy but not for men of other caste.

In substance, it overwhelmingly negates the idea of an ideal society based on the virtues of liberty, equality and fraternity. The system of caste, therefore, needs to be understood in a dispassionate and unattached manner in order to get to the reality of things as ordained by caste.

Taking his argument to the very root cause of the problem, Ambedkar tries to unmask the hidden pernicious motivations behind the idea of *Chaturvarnya*, as the foundation of the caste system. He argues that as a system of social organisation, *Chaturvarnya* appears to be impracticable and harmful, and has turned out to be a miserable failure. Even from the practical point of view, *Chaturvarnya* seems to be surrounded by a number of difficulties like explaining and establishing the basic difference between caste and the principle underlying *varna*; ignoring the uniqueness of every individual and by strait-jacketing all the individuals into just four classes would be like killing the ingenuity of each individual; negating of the idea of a penal system to deal with all the people equally; and finally ignoring the position of the women in such a system. Ambedkar, therefore, asserts that even if *Chaturvarnya* becomes a practicable system, it is bound to be the most vicious one.

Having exposed the inherent fallacies of the caste system and its conceptual construct *Chaturvarnya*, Ambedkar exhorts people to go for transforming the Hindu social order. He maintains that various methods have been suggested in this regard but most of them appear inadequate in themselves. For instance, the idea of changing the social order by abolishing sub-castes would not suffice as it would not necessarily lead to the abolition of caste. Similarly, inter-caste dining would serve only limited purpose as it would not succeed in killing the spirit and consciousness of caste. The abolition of caste, thus, argues Ambedkar, can be achieved only by intermarriage.

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> Fusion of blood can alone create the feeling of being kith and kin and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount, the separatist feeling—the feeling of being aliens—created by caste will not vanish. Among the Hindus, intermarriage must necessarily be a factor of greater force in social life than it need be in the life of the non-Hindu…. The real remedy for breaking caste is intermarriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of caste. (Rodrigues 2004: 288–89)

Being a realist to the core, Ambedkar raises the question on the chances of the success of social reform aimed at annihilating the caste. He very perceptibly discerns that of the various methods of bringing out social reform, the one to suit the purpose of abolishing caste would need to be routed through the denouncement of the fundamental religious notions. As he argues, 'Caste has a divine basis. You must therefore destroy the sacredness and divinity with which caste has become invested. In the last analysis, this means you must destroy the authority of the *Shashtra*s and the *Veda*s' (ibid.: 291). However, this seemingly turned out to be the pious wishes of Ambedkar as he was quick enough to point out that such a task might be well-nigh possible for certain obvious reasons. For instance, while the Brahmans would be the most formidable stumbling block in this context due to their vested interests in the existing social order, the other castes might also not go for it keeping in mind the two unique aspects of the caste system.

> In one of its aspects, it divides men in to separate communities. In its second aspect, it places these communities in a graded order one above the other in social status. Each caste takes its pride and its consolation in the fact that in the scale of castes it is above some other caste. (ibid.: 294)

Therefore, the path of destruction of caste needs to be treaded carefully and dynamically.

In arguing his case for the abolition of caste through the destruction of religion, Ambedkar feels it imperative to clarify his position as to what he meant by destruction of religion. Establishing a fine difference between the notions of rules and principles of religion, he maintains that the rules (practical regulations) which justify exploitative character of caste system must be destroyed while the principles (intellectual norms) of the religion may be retained to

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provide for an egalitarian religious order in society. Yet, in any case, the doctrinal basis of the Hindu religion must be in consonance with the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity or democracy so that a new egalitarian social order could be built in the country.

Finally, by way of winding up his speech, Ambedkar could not resist the temptation of putting certain thought-provoking questions to the Hindus. First, he exhorts the Hindus to examine their religion and morality in terms of their survival value, as sticking to them might lead to the undoing of the Hindu society as such. Second, the Hindus must ponder whether they need to preserve their social heritage in its entirety or select what is helpful and subsequently transmit to their posterity only the helpful to the exclusion of the others. Third, they need to think whether they should continue to be inspired and motivated by their past to take the present as empty and future as remote which might prove debilitating to the progress and well-being of the people. Fourth, should Hindus not consider that the time has come to realise that there is nothing fixed eternal and *sanatan*? Moreover, they should take:

> ... that change is the law of life for individuals as well as for society. In a changing society, there must be a constant revolution of old values and the Hindus must realise that if there must be standards to measure the act of men, there must also be a readiness to revise those standards. (Rodrigues 2004: 304)

In conclusion, it may be argued that the *Annihilation of Caste* was apparently conceptualised by Ambedkar in order to provide for a comprehensive critique of the exploitative and inequitable elements of the Hindu society, on the one hand, and suggest the ways and means of carrying out the required level of socio-religious reforms in the right direction, on the other. In doing so, it appeared that Ambedkar still reposed his faith in the reformability of the Hindu society and Hindu religion which lay at the root of the caste system. It, thus, bears testimony to the standard strategy of Ambedkar in denouncing the evils of the system unsparingly while retaining the hope and belief in the potential of the Hindu society to reform itself in order to become a place where the ideals of democratic life may be guaranteed to all.

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GANDHI–AMBEDKAR DEBATE

The basic issue lying at the core of the Gandhi–Ambedkar intellectual acrimony appears to be the fundamental differences between the perspective of the two leaders regarding the probable solution to the problems of untouchability and the other vices of caste system.[1] At the outset, most of the people including Gandhi and Ambedkar presumably understood the problem of untouchability as lying in the domain of social reform for which sustainable efforts needed to be made. However, while Gandhi continued to view the problem of untouchability as a social issue, Ambedkar gradually got convinced of the veracity of a multi-pronged strategy for emancipation of the depressed classes in which winning political rights turned out to be the main objective (Gore 1993: 85). Moreover, the growing tendency on the part of Ambedkar to relate the idea of untouchability to the whole system of, what may be called as the Hindu view of life,[2] which appeared to be very close to the heart of the Mahatma Gandhi, also apparently brought him in direct clash with the latter, the flash point of which came in the form of the Poona Pact.

Ambedkar's quest for political rights of the depressed classes may be traced to his consultation by the Southborough Committee of 1919, set up to reformulate the electoral franchise under the proposed constitutional reform. But his inability to zero in on a specific formula did not allow him to ask for a particular solution and considered a number of options like reserved seats and separate electorate equally viable (Keer 1954: 40). However, by the time of the Simon Commission of 1928, he appeared inclined about the plausibility of reserved seats in comparison to a separate electorate. Yet, during the various Round Table Conferences and proceedings of the Minorities Committee, Ambedkar was apparently weaned away by the supporters of the separate electorate formula in the name of getting more protection for the untouchables. Expectedly, Gandhi's opposition to this scheme was tooth and nail.

Significantly, during the 1920s and early 1930s when the problem of untouchability was being sought to be resolved through the political empowerment of the untouchables, Gandhi evolved and persisted with a socio-humanist approach to the problem. Through his writings in *Young India*, he forcefully decried the practice of

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untouchability and asserted that no occupation attributes a social status to the people. The uniqueness of Gandhian approach on the issue lied in his toiling for abolition of untouchability without compromising on the basic tenets of Hindu religion and the flawless theoretical construct of the caste system, praising it for saving Hinduism from disintegration (Gandhi 1920, 1966: 83). Thus, his approach to the problem of untouchability rested on its eradication through self-enlightenment of the people which was in sharp contrast to the Ambedkar's approach of waging struggles for the same. Interestingly, even by 1940s, when Gandhi seemed willing to accept intermarriage as a means of eradicating the vices of caste system, he still did not support the eradication of caste as a social unit which brought him in conflict with Ambedkar whose historical call for the annihilation of caste had presumably become one of cherished goals of his life.

Amidst such contradictory positions on the issues of caste and untouchability between Gandhi and Ambedkar, when the Communal Award came in 1932 recognising the right of the untouchables for a separate electorate, it heralded a flurry of activities. Gandhi began his epic fast[3] unto death arousing a wave of sympathy for him from all across the country. Though Ambedkar could hold on for a few days in face of the growing public pressure to compromise with Gandhi, he was persuaded as a 'true satyagrahi' (Kumar 1987: 98) to meet Gandhi in view of the willingness of the Mahatma to offer more reserved seats to the untouchables in return of their renunciation of the separate electorate system. Thus, consequent upon the signing of the Poona Pact, Gandhi broke his fast on 26 September 1932 with a seeming resolve for a more vigorous pursuit in the direction of the emancipation of the untouchables.

The chain of events unleashed in the aftermath of the Poona Pact appears to have gone in driving a wedge in the formidable anti-untouchability movement spearheaded by Ambedkar till now. A few days after the Poona Pact, Gandhi inspired his trusted disciple G.D. Birla to set up the All India Anti-Untouchability League with a massive fund to work for the eradication of untouchability. Professing that untouchability is a crime against humanity and God, Gandhi initiated a series of programmes like organising Untouchability Abolition Week, campaigns for the promotion of interests of the untouchables and publication of a

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new weekly journal *Harijan*, in order to hammer out the point that he was equally for the protection and promotion of the interests of the untouchables. On a tour of the country to propagate his anti-untouchability ideas, Gandhi faced stiff resistance and sometimes violent protests at the hands of the orthodox upper caste *Sanatani* Hindus. However, Gandhi's activities for the cause of untouchables continued unabated ostensibly with a view to make people, particularly untouchables, convinced of the genuineness of his concern for them.

The growing intervention of Gandhi in the activities for the emancipation of untouchables apparently led to the weakening of the position of Ambedkar in bringing about comprehensive politicisation of the untouchables. Surprisingly, despite disagreeing with the Gandhian perspective on the cause of the emancipation of untouchables, the vigour of Gandhi's anti-untouchability campaign and the consequent protest by and opposition of the orthodox upper caste Hindus to it convinced Ambedkar, at least temporarily, of the honesty of such programmes. However, these activities cumulatively worked to frustrate the long term aim of Ambedkar to politicise the untouchables and evolve them into a formidable force on the political landscape of the country. For instance, under the Poona Pact, the idea of:

> ... reserved seats thwarted Ambedkar's desire to transform Untouchables into a political force. Given that they never found themselves in a majority in a constituency, an alliance (explicit or tacit) of the upper and intermediate castes could even elect an Untouchable of their choice for whom Untouchables themselves would not have voted. (Jaffrelot 2005: 71)

Such a turn of events surely would not have been in the contemplation of Ambedkar when he devised the strategy of political radicalisation of untouchables to make them a force to reckon with in the subsequent years.

During the later years, the unrelenting efforts of Gandhi for the cause of anti-untouchability on the one hand, and occasional praise of Ambedkar's concern for untouchables appeared to have put the latter in a dilemmatic situation as to appreciate the Gandhian efforts or go for a break with him and concentrate on his own activities on this count. For instance, reposing his faith in the All India Anti-Untouchability League (later renamed as *Harijan Sewak Sangh*),

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Ambedkar met Gandhi in jail to seek the majority representation in the composition of the League. However, his request was not acceded to and the *Harijan Sewak Sangh* continued to be dominated by caste Hindus which led to the eventual resignation of Ambedkar from the membership of League. Subsequently, the bonhomie between Gandhi and Ambedkar started withering away as issues like role of the Anti-Untouchability League, legal abolition of untouchability, right of temple entry for untouchables, and so on, bringing the two in an apparently irreconcilable position. Moreover, Gandhi's basic disagreement with the core ideas of Ambedkar on the question of abolition of caste and untouchability such as doing away with the *Chaturvarnya* system, promotion of inter-dining and intermarriage, abolishing the foundational precepts of the Hindu religion, and so on, convinced him of his incompatibility with the Mahatma on the issue of direction and thrust of the anti-untouchability movement. Accompanying this was the predicament of Gandhi on the issue of his anti-untouchability campaigns in that while the orthodox Hindus cautioned him on the extraordinary pace of his movement, Ambedkar appeared totally frustrated with him for being too slow in this regard. Thus, so distraught Ambedkar appeared in the wake of the failure of his strategy of politicisation of untouchables that he declared, 'I am going to withdraw myself from politics and devote myself entirely to my profession, as soon as the work of this [Third] Round Table Conference will be finished' (Jaffrelot 2005: 73). Yet, as a seasoned politician, he sprang back to politics once the elections were declared under the Government of India Act, 1935.

POLITICAL THOUGHTS OF AMBEDKAR

Being a scholar-activist, keeping a vigilant eye on the happenings of his times and responding to them at both theoretical as well as practical plains, it was obvious for Ambedkar to have written and commented on a wide range of issues pertaining to the political scenario of the country. The political thought of Ambedkar, therefore, does not come as a body of organised and systematic theorisation. On the contrary, the political thought of Ambedkar

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consists of the views expressed by him in the form of numerous statements, speeches, books and monographs coming in the wake of a particular issue being raised at the specific point of time. For instance, during the 1950s when the problem of linguistic reorganisation of states became a burning issue in the wake of agitations and fasts primarily in the southern part of country, he was prompted to pen down the book *Thoughts on Linguistic States* to articulate his intellectual understanding of the problem and the probable solution to it. Nevertheless, Ambedkar as a political thinker appears liberal, but not a dogmatic one to the core as his context-driven critical beliefs in the liberal values underpin almost the entire body of political thought as reflected in the main strands of the political thinking Ambedkar articulated in various contexts and forms from time to time.

RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE

While articulating his views on the annihilation of caste, Ambedkar repeatedly expressed himself in favour of a social order based on the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity (see, for details, Ambedkar 1990c), presumably to highlight the absence of and the need for the same in the Indian society, especially in case of untouchables. Rooted in this contextual framework, he went on to explain the imperative, nature and limits of the rights. The imperative of individual rights, for Ambedkar, appears to have become evident due to its democratising impact on the society. As a firm believer in an egalitarian and democratic socio-political system, Ambedkar was convinced that such an order can be ordained only by having the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity indissolubly ingrained in the law of the land of the country. To him, the right of an individual appears to be the ameliorating agent set to bring about fundamental changes in the social and political standing of the person in the society.

Presumably in order to emphasise the indissolubility of the rights, Ambedkar stood by the natural theory of rights instead of the legal theory of rights which ought to have been the case, given his comprehensive training in the legal profession. Hence, taking the rights as natural and inherent in the human personality,

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he stressed on social sanction instead of legal support as the true perspective of securing the rights to the people. As Ambedkar (1964: 34–35) explains,

> ...rights are protected not by law but by moral conscience of society. If social conscience is such that it is prepared to recognise the rights which law chooses to enact, rights will be safe and secure. But if the fundamental rights are opposed by the community, no law, no parliament, no judiciary can guarantee them in the real sense of the word.

However, the starkness and rigidity of the prevailing social inequalities, indignities and discriminations against the untouchables seemed to have weighed heavily in the mind of Ambedkar, as he vehemently argued for the constitutional protection of the fundamental rights of the people. Thus, the theoretical understanding of the nature and practical manifestation of the concept of rights seemed to differ in Ambedkar ostensibly in view of the contextual imperatives of different times.

The context-driven fluctuations in the perspective of Ambedkar on rights again became evident at the time of the debate on the issue in the Constituent Assembly. Thus, surprisingly, a champion of the natural and inherent rights, believing in the inalienability of certain rights such as right to life and liberty, was seen arguing for antithetical provisions such as preventive detention and suspension of such basic rights like the right to constitutional remedies during abnormal circumstances. As he explained,

> ...there can be no doubt that while there are certain fundamental rights which the state must guarantee to the individual in order that the individual may have some security and freedom to develop his own personality, it is equally clear that in certain cases, where, for instance, the state's very life is in jeopardy, those rights must be subjected to a certain amount of limitation. (*Constituent Assembly Debates* 1947: 950)

In sum, despite appearing contradictory at times, Ambedkar's ideas on rights seem to reflect the perspective of a prudent realist who remained conforming to the dynamics of varying times.

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CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY

As a liberal thinker, Ambedkar was a hardcore believer in the value of constitutional democracy having irrevocable elements of social and economic democracies, in addition to political democracy. Indeed, the notion of social democracy situated in the framework of the constitutional democracy, appeared dearer to him than political democracy, presumably because of the fact that it was the thing he fought for throughout his life. Quite evidently, to him,

> [Social democracy] means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity which are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality; equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. (cited in Chakrabarty and Pandey 2008: 10)

The complex web of democracy, thus, for Ambedkar was expected to consist of not only the sterile inputs mainly political in nature, but also the dynamic elements of social and economic democracies with the balance weighing heavily in the favour of social democracy.

Though as a framework of life, Ambedkar emphasised the social component of democracy, as a system of government, he explicitly expressed himself in the favour of British parliamentary model of democracy. Taking it as the system providing ample scope for reconciliation of the individual good and the social good, he was keen on imbibing the basic liberal values which underpin the functioning of parliamentary democracy. For instance, he seemed overwhelmed by the virtue of the rule of law as the foundational characteristic of a democracy as it lays down the basic functional domain of various actors in the polity. Under rule of law, as Ambedkar (1947: 9) explains,

> ...all citizens are equal before law and possess equal civic rights. No state shall make or enforce any law or custom which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty and property without the process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction equal protection of law.

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Showing the wisdom of a realist thinker, Ambedkar was quick to conceptualise the notion of democracy within the peculiar contextual framework evident in India. For instance, he was in no case ready to afford the rule of majoritarianism as has been the case with classical notion of parliamentary democracy for the sake of stability, good governance and efficiency of the government as he was convinced that, 'efficiency combined with selfish class interests instead of producing good government is far more likely to become a mere engine of suppression of the servile classes' (Ambedkar 1945: 245). Similarly, in clear departure from the British context, Ambedkar was clear in his mind to locate the parliamentary democracy in India in the framework of a federal setup keeping in mind the requirements of the Indian circumstances. Moreover, never hesitant to borrow from other constitutions to make the suitability of Indian Constitution best for India, Ambedkar seemingly retrofitted the parliamentary constitutional democratic arrangements of India with a number of plausible and patently suitable provisions drawn from the Presidential system of America such as the supremacy of the Constitution and the provision of an independent judiciary. In sum, thus, Ambedkar's views on democracy appear quite pragmatic and free from theoretical dogmas usually attached with such conceptualisations.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ambedkar was a protagonist of the idea of social justice as an inalienable part of the constitutional democratic framework in India. Conceptually, social justice apparently refers to a distinct aspect of the socio-economic and political system of the country through which concerted and coordinated measures are initiated, aimed at ameliorating the disadvantaged position of the depressed classes in society. Ambedkar was of the firm opinion that the provisions for securing only political justice would not suffice to bring about the desired level of socio-upliftment of the untouchables so as to enable them to enjoy a life of social equality in the country. Hence, he vehemently argued for the idea of social justice as the complex and comprehensive set of socio-economic and political preferential and supportive policy measures to uplift the status of depressed classes in society. A unique point of the notion of social justice as

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propagated by Ambedkar was his insistence on providing statutory basis to such measures so that they become the policy compulsion of the government and do not remain in the nature of altruistic favours being extended to the depressed classes. Ambedkar's basic concern in arguing for the notion of social justice seems to be his perceptible understanding of the nature of social inequality in India under which dominant social relations tried to perpetuate it as some sort of natural and logical inequality requiring no corrective measures on the part of the larger society for its eradication.

To Ambedkar, the operationalisation of the idea of social justice could be carried on by putting in place a set of constitutional provisions in the nature of both protective and promotional measures. His long standing demand for an autonomous political representation of the disadvantaged groups in the political institutions of decision-making in the country was to be the major move towards securing social justice. For this, he attempted to provide for an elaborate scheme of definitive political safeguards for depressed classes in the Constitution of India (Rodrigues 2004: 369–81). He was sure that such provisions would enable the depressed classes to conceptualise their common problems and issues in the larger perspective of their all-round development and seek appropriate solutions for them in a formidable manner.

Along with distinct and autonomous political representation of the depressed classes in the institutions of Indian polity, Ambedkar also argued for reservation for the depressed sections of society in public employment, provided their eligibility for a particular job is complete. In advocating the reservation in public employment, Ambedkar presumably envisioned that such a move would serve two utmost purposes instrumental in securing a comprehensive amelioration in the conditions of the disadvantaged groups of people. First, with the increase in their share in public services, a wider majority of people belonging to the depressed classes would gain social recognition and some degree of preponderance in social relations given the overwhelming status, prestige and power that the public services carry in the feudal mindset of the majority section of Indians. Second, such an assured employment would probably also contribute to the economic upliftment of the depressed groups as regular and fairly sufficient source of income in a family might add to the amelioration in the hitherto miserable economic conditions of the family. Thus, combined together,

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the idea of reservation in public services was considered to be a crucial component in the scheme of social justice envisioned by Ambedkar for the depressed sections of Indian society.

Reiterating the infallible claim of the depressed classes for preferential treatment in various spheres of socio-economic and political life in the country, Ambedkar showed an enormous degree of valiance by conceptualising preferential measures within the framework of inclusive conception of rights. Such a conceptualisation became quite significant ostensibly due to the fact that the preferential treatment to the disadvantaged sections need not be construed as a reflection of the benevolence of the majority, a viewpoint quite probable given the reticence of such people in accepting the rational imperative of the policy. Moreover, he argued that such a conceptual understanding of the notion of preferential treatment would inspire the depressed classes to fight for these measures if the government showed any leniency in affording them to the people. Thus, it may be said to be a tribute to the conceptualisation of social justice as the key element of emancipation of the depressed classes that the protective and promotional constitutional measures have come to be the basic framework through which the disadvantaged groups of people are getting empowered and emancipated in post-independent India.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

A survey of the thought and actions of Ambedkar reflects the solitary purpose of his life: the emancipation of untouchables in Indian society. Taking inspiration and lessons from his own life, Ambedkar remained an untiring crusader for the cause of untouchables during a life spanning over six decades. As Zelliot (1992: 53) puts it so eloquently,

> ...during his lifetime, Ambedkar played three roles: that of a caste-leader, that of an untouchable spokesman, and that of a national statesman. In his first leadership, he was guide, *guru* and decision-maker for his own caste, the Mahars of Maharashtra, from the mid-twenties of this century until his death. From the early 1930s onwards, he was the chief spokesman of the untouchables in the eyes of the government of India, the untouchable leader who had to be

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> dealt with from the viewpoint of the Indian National Congress, and the individual most responsible for India's policies of compensatory discrimination towards scheduled castes. In his third role, he spoke on all phases of India's development, worked on problems of labour and law, as a member of the government, and even put aside his theories to help create a viable, generally accepted constitution.

The potential problem in playing such multiple roles seems to be maintaining a fair degree of clarity, consistency and successful exposition of various ideas and performance of diverse roles, from which even Ambedkar could not escape. Hence, as an expert on Ambedkar points out, he quite often found faltering on such virtues of a great theoretician and practitioner, the obvious result of which is that his political and economic thought and his politics were contradictory and lacking in clarity and precision. Except in advocating the cause of untouchables, there is no consistency in his ideas (Kuber 1986: 309).

Such seemingly scathing critique of Ambedkar, however, appears to expose its obliviousness to the contexts and circumstances in which he has to think and act. Moreover, it also appears to ignore his intense and uncompromising objective of serving the cause of emancipation of the untouchables despite being seen inconsistent and slippery on his words and actions. In fact, what appeared dear to him was his objective for which he persevered and, hence, in case a particular strategy failed to attain that objective, he did not have any hesitation to opt for another plausible course of action provided it served the purpose at hand. As Jaffrelot has shown this character of Ambedkar's illustratingly, in the course of time, Ambedkar:

> ... deepened his reflection on the caste system and discovered that 'graded inequality', its structuring principle, gravely endangered the unity of the lower castes and, hence, their capacity for mobilisation. But which strategy should be implemented to surmount this obstacle? Ambedkar sought institutional guarantees to protect the interest of Untouchables and to this end pursued several strategies. The first was to obtain a separate electorate, an option, shut out by Gandhi in 1932, and later by debates in the Constituent Assembly. This obliged Ambedkar to fight for a system of reserved seats and implied collaboration with those in power, whether the colonial authorities or the Congress regime. (Jaffrelot 2005: 161)

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Thus, the circumstantial imperatives always tried to test the courage of conviction in Ambedkar and his response to such trying situations was at best reflected in dilemmatic and varying postures. For instance, in face of his deeper understanding of the texture and functional dynamics of the Hindu society, Ambedkar was always in a dilemma whether to break out from the fold of the Hindu society or there still remains a possibility of respectful and dignified integration of the untouchables within the fold of Hinduism. This dilemma kept on cropping up in the postures of Ambedkar and his concrete response in this regard appeared to have been tilted by force of one particular course of action during that specific time. He, thus, despite renunciating the moves towards Sanskritisation on the part of untouchables, remained hopeful that they still could remain within the fold of the Hindu social order to gain a respectful and dignified position in society through constitutionally guaranteed protective and promotional provisions. However, at the fag end of his life, when all efforts and options of securing a dignified life for untouchables appeared futile to him, he, for the first time, took the ultimate step of leaving the fold of the Hindu religion to become part of the Buddhist religion, a decision which Ambedkar presumably might not have taken without experiencing immense pain and suffocation.

Ambedkar, in a nutshell, symbolised the life and action of a visionary and practitioner whose entire pursuits were aimed at securing just one purpose: emancipation of the untouchables. However, the net result of his pursuits appeared to be half way mark from any angle. As Jaffrelot (2005: 162) points out categorically,

> ...certainly he obtained major concessions from the British by collaborating with them—including a new policy of positive discrimination in favour of the Untouchables—and his politics made an impact during the constitutional debates when he gained more concessions for the Dalits and succeeded in marginalising some Gandhian propositions. But he did not get the separate electorate he wanted for the Scheduled Castes, he failed to have concrete social reforms adopted, such as the Hindu Code Bill, and he was not able to establish a party representing the interests of the Untouchables of India as a whole.

Despite such a mixed bag of results of his political life, what remains unmistakable is his undying passion for the bringing about

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positive transformations in the life of untouchables. Though he died a distraught person, the glorious legacy left by him still inspires, guides and introduces numerous organisations and individuals to dedicate themselves to the cause Ambedkar fought for throughout his life.

NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion on the debates between Gandhi and Ambedkar, see Chakrabarty (2006: 102–12).
2. For one of best expositions on the subject, see Radhakrishnan (1963).
3. For an insightful articulation of this fast, see Pyarelal (1932).

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6 Jayaprakash Narayan

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To provide an explanation for Jayaprakash Narayan's transition from Marxism to *sarvodaya*.
- To illustrate Jayaprakash Narayan's ideas on reconstruction of the Indian polity.
- To assess the notion and feasibility of Jayaprakash Narayan's idea of *sarvodaya*.
- To explain Jayaprakash Narayan's concept of total revolution.

As a political thinker, Jayaprakash Narayan (1902–79), popularly called JP, seemingly represented one of the two discernible traditions underpinning the whole body of political thought in India. As such, one tradition of political thinking in the country may be said to have the unique distinction of invariably keeping almost perfect ideological consistency in the thought process of the thinker at various stages of his life which, on the flip side, might also be called the conservatism of the thinker. Nevertheless, this tradition has the quality of clearly demonstrating the ideological convictions of the thinker to such an extent that even the lived experiences of the thinker could not motivate him or her to carry out any sort of modifications or alterations in his or her ideological standing. The outstanding illustration of this tradition of Indian political thought may arguably be said to be none other than Mahatma Gandhi whose ideological position articulated as early as 1908 in *Hind Swaraj* remained unchangeably dear to him. When asked to incorporate certain modifications in his allegedly anachronistic ideological predilections of his early days, Gandhi showed an exemplary courage of conviction by stating that his experiences of those many years did not inspire to change even a single word crafted in *Hind Swaraj* at the time of its creation!

On the contrary, the other tradition of Indian political thinking consists of an extraordinary dynamism in the intellectually hyperfertile minds and experience-wise highly diversified personalities of the thinkers. As a result, the earlier ideological convictions of such thinkers could not be retained fulsomely and over a period of time, the intellectual discourses and theorisations by such thinkers predominantly bore the mark of contemporary ideological influences on their thinking process. While such thinkers

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undoubtedly appeared very versatile and diverse in their theorisations, the foremost casualty of such versatility and diversity in theorisations, arguably, seemed to be the virtue of consistency. Probably, a classic example of such a versatile and diversified yet inconsistent theorisation seems to be M.N. Roy whose rich, though occasionally painful, lived experiences of life turned him into so many intellectual incarnations that one is apparently bewildered at the range and depth of his intellectual discourses and theorisations. JP seems to be an icon of the second tradition of political thinking in India.

A LIFE OF IDEOLOGICAL TURBULENCE

JP's life happens to be a life of endless quest for getting suitable ways and means to ameliorate the socio-economic and political conditions of the toiling masses of the country. Born on 11 October 1902 in a village in Chhapra district in Bihar, he appeared to be an unconventional boy even from his early childhood as he was never found to be treading on the beaten track in the pursuits of his life. For instance, while in his studies he usually opted for the uncommon subjects, defying the prevailing social norms of his times he went for a dowryless and simple marriage under the influence of the nationalist leaders.[1] However, turbulent twists and turns set on in the life of JP from the early 1920s, when his life could not move on the chartered course due to his exposure to newer situations and contexts. For example, his studies almost got ruptured in 1921 when under the influential exhortation of Maulana Azad, he made up his mind to quit studies and join the national movement under Gandhi.

Sensing JP's growing inclination towards the national movement, his parents presumably motivated him to go abroad for his higher studies. Consequently, he landed up in the United States to pursue a degree course in Chemical Engineering. However, his inquisitive mind seeking a deeper understanding of the problems bothering people both at home and abroad, and his urge to become a part of the solutions to such problems compelled him to give up his engineering pursuits and move on to study sociology at the University of Wisconsin. This probably proved a turning point in the life of JP as his erudition in sociology drenched his mind

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in the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Marxist writers like M.N. Roy, leading him eventually to become one of the most orthodox Marxists in India (Ghosh 1984: 393). Believing that the existing socio-economic problems of India could be solved only within the Marxist–Leninist ideological framework, JP outlined a comprehensive scheme of radical reforms supposedly to bring about a socialist socio-economic order in the country.

TRANSITION FROM MARXISM TO *SARVODAYA*

On his return to India in 1929, JP readily joined the national movement with the burning urge to practice socialism in India. His imprisonment in the wake of the Civil Disobedience Movement at Nasik Jail brought him close to the other like-minded nationalists which later on culminated in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in April 1934 (Sarkar 1989: 332). He also organised an All India Socialist Conference at Patna in May 1934 to strengthen the socialist movement in the country. However, his passion for Marxism was so strong that in 1936, JP published a thought-provoking booklet 'Why Socialism', under the aegis of the CSP, arguing that 'today more than ever before is possible to say that there is only one type, one theory of Socialism-Marxism' (Narayan 1936: 1). The booklet primarily aimed at providing a sort of ideological symmetry to the believers in the ideology of communism and socialism, and narrating a blueprint for the ideas and actions of the CSP.

The Marxist phase of JP's life seemingly continued during the decade of the 1930s, after which he drifted to the philosophy of democratic socialism and finally turning out to be *sarvodayee* in the post-independence times. This ideological transition in the thinking of JP needs to be explained to find out the causes for his disenchantment with an ideology which, at one point of time, seemed to be the only plausible framework of bringing about the socio-economic transformations in the country. In fact, JP's disenchantment from the ideology of Marxism apparently emanated at his critical appraisal of the course of events which the Bolshevik revolution took in the long term. The establishment of some sort of military bureaucratic dictatorship under the leadership of Stalin

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in place of the promised dictatorship of the proletariat distressingly compelled JP to review his indoctrination in the ideology of Marxism at both philosophical as well as practical planes.

Quite evidently, the philosophical critique of Marxism by JP was also presumably conditioned by his increasing appreciation of the Gandhian techniques such as *satyagraha*, non-violence and the conformist perspective on the end–means dialectics. For instance, at one point of time, JP was quite critical of the slowness of the Gandhian methods of peaceful struggle and argued for the use of socialist methods to bring about quick socio-economic transformations of the society. But when empirical evidence from the Soviet Union started showing the true picture of the violent and forced methods of securing people's obedience to the Communist Party and a highly pressurised and forced extraction of labour from the workers to ensure a fast pace of industrialisation of the country in the times of Stalin, JP went into introspection. He ultimately came around the idea of Gandhi that to attain a pious end, the means ought to be equally pious. He wondered 'if good ends could ever be achieved by bad means' (Narayan 1959a: 22) and came to the conclusion that under Marxism, the sole focus on the veracity of means did not allow it to become a plausible ideological framework to bring about the desirable transformations in backward societies like India.

Apparently, under the influence of the ethical basis of political thinking and also movements under the leadership of Gandhi in India, JP turned out to be a staunch critic of the philosophy of dialectical materialism which forms the bedrock of Marxist ideology. He argued that the personality of a human being consists of both materialist as well as spiritual components and equal development of both was the condition precedent for the fulsome development of a human being as well as the society as a whole. But he found that the methodology of dialectical materialism confined the analysis of all the social processes to the domain of materialism only. As a result, the spiritual development of the society as well as the human being gets retarded leading to a lopsided development of the two. He, therefore, concluded that 'materialism as a philosophical outlook could not provide any basis for ethical conduct and any incentive for goodness' (ibid.: 27).

JP also expressed his reservation on a number of other formulations which constitute the foundation of Marxism. He, for instance,

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was not agreeable to the idea that dictatorship of the proletariat ought to be the infallible truth of a socialist state. He maintained that the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat has relevance only for societies undergoing transition from capitalism to socialism. Moreover, such an idea has practicability only in societies where peaceful methods of bringing about such a transition is not feasible. Hence, he took it as a mistake on the part of Marxist theoreticians who argued for the inevitability of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only method of bringing about the transformation from a capitalist to a socialist political order. Conversely, taking a reverse position, he maintained that the nature of a socialist state ought to be such that there is no need for any sort of dictatorship in the society. He, therefore, stated that it is a fallacy of the Marxian paradigm to argue for a compulsory imposition of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a socialist state (Narayan 1964: 50–51).

On the practical plane, JP showed his utter disappointment with the interrelationship between the nature of revolution and its future impact, as illustrated by the Soviet revolution in Russia. As Narayan (quoted in Panda 2004: 202) argued,

> ...a Soviet Revolution has two parts: destruction of the old order of society and construction of the new. In a successful violent revolution, success lies in the destruction of the old order from the roots. That indeed is a great achievement. But at that point, something vital happens which nearly strangles the succeeding process. During the revolution, there is widespread reorganised revolutionary violence. When that violence assisted by other factors into which one need not go here, has succeeded in destroying the old power structure, it becomes necessary to cry halt to the unorganised mass violence and create out of it an organised means of violence to protect and defend the revolution. Thus, a new instrument of power is created and whosoever among the revolutionary succeeds in capturing this instrument, they and their party or faction become the new rulers. They become the masters of the new state and power passes from the hands of the people to them. There is always struggle for power at the top and the heads roll and blood flows, victory going in the end to the most determined, the most ruthless and best organised. It is not that violent revolutionaries deceive and betray; it is just the logic of violence working itself out. It cannot be otherwise.

In facilitating JP's transition from Marxism to *sarvodaya*, the Machiavellian political processes in the Soviet Union during

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the reign of Stalin played a significant role. What hurt him the most appears to be the two prominent features of the Stalinist Soviet political system. First, the purported establishment of the dictatorship of proletariat ensured that the Soviet Union becomes one of the most closed societies in the world. Not only any sort of interaction with the rest of the world was disallowed, even within the country, the abject absence of democratic norms and ethos even in the personal and civil life of the people happened to be the hallmark of the system. This appeared very appalling to JP given his exposure to the democratic way of life in the western societies and the democratic ethos which underpinned the main body of national movement in India. Second, JP also strongly disapproved of the brutal and secretive methods used in the Soviet Union in dealing with political dissenters of the communist country. The free hand given to institutions like the Red Army, the secret police and the bureaucracy in persecuting, exterminating, torturing and even murdering the non-conformists evoked in JP a feeling of detachment from the Soviet system of government. It was such an eye-opener for him that he readily exhorted himself to learn a lesson from such a phase in history and move away from it (Panda 2004: 202).

In final analysis, what constituted to JP the fundamental drawback of the operationalisation of communism in Soviet Union was 'Lenin's attempt to realise socialism through violence and Stalin's attempt to carry out a highly pressurised and forced process of industrialisation in a backward economy. This in the very nature of things "could not be accomplished without regimentation, compulsion and suppression of freedom"' (cited in Ghosh 1984: 396). In fact, such authoritarian styles of getting a rapid socio-economic transformation of the society convinced JP of going for a model where the socio-economic change could be brought about by peaceful and democratic methods. He, therefore, articulated his conviction in the veracity of Gandhian methods to bring about the desirable socio-economic transformations in the Indian society by arguing '(*a*) that in a society where it was possible for the people by democratic means to bring abut social change, it would be counter-revolutionary to resort to violence, and (*b*) that socialism could not exist, nor be created, in the absence of democratic freedoms' (Narayan 1959a: 18).

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PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF INDIAN POLITY

JP's growing frustration with the Marxian praxis and practical manifestation of its socio-economic and political order led him to evolve some sort of alternative order suitable to the specific requirements of the country. The adoption of the Constitution in the post-independence times was taken positively by the majority of people with the hope that it would result into translating the high aspirations of the national movement. However, people like JP soon got disillusioned with the working of the democratic polity in the country. Later, JP embarked on a tour of various European countries ostensibly in order to get a feel of the structure and functioning of the governments in these countries. A basic flaw discovered by JP in the structure of most of the system of governments, including the one prevailing in India after the implementation of the Constitution of 1950 was increasing concentration of powers at the higher levels of government. This appeared quite distressing to JP as, being a true democrat, he wanted the powers to be vested in the hands of the people and only that much power need to be transferred to the higher levels of authority structure which would have been unavoidably required. Thus, in order to give a concrete shape to his ideas on comprehensive reconceptualising the nature and structure of Indian political system, he published the book *A Plea for the Reconstruction of Indian Polity* in 1959.

In advancing his plea for the reconstruction of Indian polity, JP appeared extremely influenced by the ideas of Sri Aurobindo as he found in them the 'extraordinary, intuitive sweep of his vision [that] has laid bare the true nature of the foundations of Indian polity' (Narayan 1959b: 22). Following Aurobindo's line of argument, JP was convinced of the veracity of the ancient Indian political order based on the centrality of the self-governing village communities in that order. Indeed, JP's seemingly uncritical appreciation of the ancient Indian political order was so formidable that he argued that the conceptualisation of the political system in the post-independent times in India was nothing but 'a question of an ancient country finding its lost soul again' (ibid.: 26). Thus, JP's basic argument in calling for the reconstruction of the Indian polity was to reinvent and implant the village based political order with the

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idea of decentralisation underpinning the basic functional ethos and spirit of the system.

Significantly, JP called for the replacement of prevailing politico-economic order in India based on the parliamentary system of democracy and centralised planning with what is called as the communitarian democracy and decentralised political economy (Narayan 1959b: 66–68). In fact, JP was a staunch critic of the parliamentary system of democracy, denouncing it from all probable quarters. But the most intolerable defect of such a system of democracy, to JP, was its inherent tendency towards centralism, which appears to be a contrast in terms of itself. In other words, the notion of democracy could not be conceptualised in a way that it leads to or supports any sort of centralism. As the parliamentary system of democracy invariably slips towards centralism, it could not have been the best of models of government for India.

The notion of 'communitarian democracy' as advocated by JP carries a distinct set of political processes which is squarely different from the ones characterising the nature of political processes in parliamentary democracy. For instance, the essence of the parliamentary democracy lies in intense competition amongst the political parties to seek power and establish their preponderance in the political system. On the contrary, JP suggests that the essence of the communitarian democracy lies in cooperation and co-sharing, as such a system must afford due space to all the interests of the society to be articulated in the political decision-making of the country in a harmonious manner. Naturally, in such a conceptualisation of democracy, JP's emphasis was on the moral and ethical moorings of democracy in utter contrast to the material and power-centred nature of the parliamentary system. To JP, therefore, the fundamental task of communitarian democracy is the moral regeneration to be brought about by example, service, sacrifice and love of scores of voluntary workers (ibid.: 107).

In conceptualising his plea for the reconstruction of the Indian polity, the basic concern of JP has been argued to be the idea of solving the riddle of representative democracy in the country (Samaddar 2008: 49). In concrete terms, JP's plea to reconstruct the Indian polity was principally based on the framework of a decentralised, participatory and grass roots oriented political order as reflected in practical shape by the idea of *panchayati raj*

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as existing in the country since ancient times. This would be an essentially pyramidal model of democracy with widest possible diffusion of powers at the grass roots level making it the real level of government which matters most to people. Thus, JP's model gives a more decentralised base to the 'four-pillar model of government' as suggested by Ram Manohar Lohia (for details, see Chapter 10). To put it differently, while Lohia suggested the levels of villages, district, state and centre as the levels of governments, JP tried to broaden the base of local level of government by including a middle level also in between the village and district levels so that the operational imperatives of the local government may be strengthened. Thus, what JP suggested was five levels of decentralised polity consisting of village, block, district, provincial and central levels.

In JP's scheme of things on reconstructing the Indian polity, an overwhelming emphasis was placed on reviving and reinvigorating the *panchayati raj* system or what he calls as '*swaraj* from below' (Narayan [undated]: Chapter 2). Under this framework, the basic and lowest unit of political organisation would be the *Gram Sabha* (village assembly) consisting of all the adults of the village. Primarily being a deliberative body to ensure the participation of all the adult residents of the village in the governance of their affairs, the *Gram Sabha* would elect, ordinarily by consensus, five or more members amongst themselves to constitute its executive committee which would be called *Gram Panchayat*. Thus, through these *panch*s (members of the village panchayat) acting as functionaries to take care of the day-to-day functioning of the system, the *Gram Sabha* was supposed to act as the lynchpin of the grass roots democracy conceptualised by JP.

Establishing an organic link amongst the various units of the *panchayati raj*, JP suggested the creation of two more interlinked bodies within the system. The middle level of *panchayati raj*, therefore, would be located identically at the administrative unit of block and would be known as *Panchayat Samiti*. Consisting of the representatives of the constituent *Gram Sabha*s, the *Panchayat Samiti*'s operational area would be identical to the areas of its constituent *Gram Sabha*s. Functionally, the *Panchayat Samiti* would be entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and coordinating the activities of the *Gram Sabha*s, with particular focus on the

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formulation and execution of development projects. Finally, the apex of the *panchayati raj* was conceptualised in terms of District Panchayat or *Zila Parishad*, constituted by the members elected by the *Panchayat Samiti*s. The functional domain of the *Zila Parishad* would ordinarily remain focussed on consolidating and fine tuning the development projects initiated or approved by the *Panchayat Samiti*s with a view to ensure their technical and economic viability. The common feature underpinning all the three levels of *panchayati raj* would be their endeavour to provide the people an opportunity to participate in the management of their own affairs and enjoy the spirit of true democracy.

Though the bodies of *panchayati raj* constituted the core of communitarian democracy as advocated by JP, he did not remain oblivious to the imperatives of the provincial and central levels of government. What was unique in his conceptualisations on these levels of government was that he wanted them to remain confined, functionally, to their stipulated domains and devoid of any temptation on their part to bulldoze over the lower levels of democratic institutions. JP, thus, argued for a democratic and federal structure of polity in India, so that the true spirit of democratic governance might be infused and afforded to the masses. Moreover, for this, he wanted the political system to be free from party politics based on numerous primordial and sectarian motivations to serve the selfish interest of dominant unscrupulous elements in the society.

An important element of the plan of reconstruction of Indian polity, as suggested by JP included the reconstruction of the economic system also (see Narayan [undated]: Chapter 3). Being dead against the exploitative and competitive economic system as prevailing in the capitalist societies, he argued for the reconstruction of Indian economic system on the doctrines of cooperation, coexistence and co-sharing. He decried the element of centralism in the Indian planning system and argued for remodelling of the planning system by making it decentralised and non-political. On the pattern of the grass roots orientation in the political system of the country, JP advocated for village-ward orientation in the planning process of the country as well. He argued that the formulation of development plans should be initiated at the level of village with its progressive integration and consolidation at the block and district levels. The

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planning processes at the state and national levels should confine themselves with only providing technical and logistical support for the formulation and execution of the plans at the local levels. JP also called for sectoral balance and harmony in bringing about rapid economic development of the country. Thus, the restructured political economy of the country, in JP's view, would result into the realisation of true *swaraj* for the common people of the country.

Despite a seeming sentimental and apparently logical consistency in the plea of JP for the reconstruction of Indian polity, his scheme has been criticised by scholars as being utopian and set to be suitable for the wonderland of JP's imagination.[2] A common critique of JP's scheme has been its obvious focus at reviving and implanting an ancient Indian construct which might have outlived its utility in the contemporary times. Moreover, the disproportionate focus on *panchayati raj* as the nucleus of the post-independent Indian polity appears absurd to the extent of its practical abstractness, among others. Thus, over the years, JP himself became quite weary of the practical utility of his plea for the reconstruction of India polity and shifted his focus of attention to what is called as '*sarvodaya*'.

SARVODAYA

Sarvodaya was a conceptual construct JP borrowed from Gandhi to cumulatively articulate his vision of a decentralised, participatory and egalitarian socio-economic and political order for the country. Delineating the core concerns of the idea of *sarvodaya*, Vinoba Bhave (1964a: 3) wrote, 'Sarvodaya does not mean good government or majority rule, it means freedom from government, it means decentralisation of power.' Conceptualised so, *sarvodaya*, thus, becomes synonymous with a state of order where the bonds of being governed by a seemingly alien or outsider ruler are totally absent and people are able to enjoy the vocations of their life without any extraneous considerations. Hence, the full realisation of the ideal of *sarvodaya* necessitates the absence of government itself in the first place, yet even if the government remains in existence, the power relations ought to be so decentralised that nobody finds himself in any sort of subjugation with another. It is within this theoretical framework that JP outlined his vision of a *sarvodaya* social order.

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In visualising his *sarvodaya* social order, JP begins with explorations in the innate characteristics of human nature. Though acknowledging that evil spirits and motivations exist in individuals and society, he argued that they can be overcome by virtues of compassion and non-violence. Moreover, by inculcating the positive values of life such as cooperation, generosity, creativity and eternal joy, the good spirits and motivations of the people might be brought on the fore to make them realise the significance of such traits in securing a happy and peaceful life for them. Above all, if the examples of such a perspective of life become prominent and people were properly educated in this regard, they would definitely pursue the noble causes and follow good men (Narayan 1961: 6). Thus, at the root of the proposed *sarvodaya* order of JP lies his indomitable belief in the inherently noble and positive nature of the common people which may be harnessed to secure a just, egalitarian and democratically decentralised order in India.

The social component of the *sarvodaya* order rests on an all-inclusive egalitarian social structure (Narayan 1959a: 39–41). The social relations would be based on the principles of equality, justice and inclusiveness of the diverse stocks of people. As society would seek the welfare of each and every individual, there would not be any place for socially degrading and discriminatory practices rooted in the primordial and sectarian motivations of any other individual. JP was quite specific about the role of various sections in the society and argued for visionary mindset and missionary zeal amongst the youth whose selfless and untiring efforts would be the main vehicle through which the reconstruction of the society would be materialised. Democratic ethos and spirit would visit all the walks of social interactions and nobody would be persuaded to do anything against his will despite the plausibility of the task at hand. Voluntarism would be major plank to get people do their bit for the welfare of society.

The political dimension of *sarvodaya*, as explained earlier, would rest on the widest and effective system of decentralised and participatory system of democracy concretised in the form of *panchayati raj*. What, however, was refreshing in the *sarvodaya* political order was JP's insistence on revolving his scheme of things around what is called as *lokniti* (politics of people) and *lokshakti* (power of people) in place of the existing dependence on *rajniti* (politics of power) and *rajya shakti* (power of state). Despite

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appearing unconventional, such notions of people-centric and society-centric perspectives of Indian politics would have been quite obvious given JP's constant prodding for decentralised and participatory nature of the *sarvodaya* political order. In fact, in the later years when the governments in India were charged with numerous cases of corruption and high-handedness in dealing with political opponents, JP relied exclusively on the powers having their roots in the social and other non-governmental formations. Thus, JP conceptualised the *sarvodaya* social order as consisting of morally upright individuals having courage to stand up for the ideals such as 'self-government, self management, mutual cooperation and sharing, equality, freedom and brotherhood' (Narayan 1959a: 40).

Economically, the framework of the *sarvodaya* order would seek to establish a balanced and equitable economic setup in the country. India being a predominantly agricultural country, JP was sure to afford the first place to agricultural activities in the economic life of the people. Hence, he argued for organising numerous collectivist farms under the collective ownership and management of the whole village. Further, JP's deep faith in the Gandhian economic perspectives apparently influenced him to advocate a prime place to village and cottage industries organised at local and regional levels. However, the wave of heavy industrialisation in various parts of the world made him offer a place to heavy and large scale industries also in the industrial outlook of the economy. Thus, in *sarvodaya* economy, a balanced approach according due weightage to various sectors of economy would be followed. The net gains from the economic activities of the society would be so equitably distributed that it results in a decentralised, prosperous, distributive and participatory economic order.

METHODS OF REALISING THE *SARVODAYA* ORDER

Having conceptualised the *sarvodaya* social order in very insightful and precise terms, JP also appeared quite categorical in suggesting the appropriate methods of implementing the plan for creating a *sarvodaya* social order in India. Quite evidently, JP's deep erudition and lived experiences in various methods and institutional arrangements in bringing about drastic transformations in society made

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him a rebel vis-à-vis numerous conventional methods of effecting desirable social change. For instance, his old fancies about the classical Marxian prescription of changing the society through revolutionary violence no more remained a favourite with him. Castigating the violent methods of social change, he held that such methods did not take care of the veracity of the objective in view and 'ensure the victory of party that is more skilled in its use' (Narayan 1961: 4–5). The victory ensured by such methods would invariably, as shown primarily by the Russian experiences, be authoritarian and undermine 'all attempts at democracy and the attainment of social justice or equality' (ibid.: 4–5).

Significantly, JP was equally disillusioned with the liberal methods of social change which is sought to be achieved through the means of legal provisions and institutional arrangement to implement them. JP's basic critique of the parliamentary route of effecting social change was that it would not yield desirable results without mentally preparing people to accept and adapt such changes in their lifestyles. As he wrote eloquently,

> [I]t is not institutions, not laws, not political system, not constitutions which create good people. For that you require a widespread process of education understood in the widest sense of the word. Education does not mean academic education; but the improving of human beings through service, love, examples, preaching, reasoning and argument. (ibid.: 151)

JP also argued for setting of concrete examples by the leaders and awakened citizens of the country, so that the masses could emulate such examples and be equipped with proper education to be able to become the harbinger of a new *sarvodaya* social order in the country.

The cumulative impact of the twin virtues of education and concrete examples, in JP's view, would be to ingrain an indelible mark of awakening in a person's mental and moral values, infusing some sort of voluntary perspective in him towards the prevailing problems of the society and plausible solutions for them. The concrete exemplification of such a moralist theoretical construct was experienced in the *Bhoodan* and *Gramdaan* movements launched by Vinoba Bhave. JP was very impressed with the idea and practice of such voluntary sharing on the part of the people and argued for the extension and strengthening of such movements by way

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of *sampattidaan* (sharing together of property) and the ultimate *jeevandaan* (sharing together the entire life of an individual and dedicating it for the cause of welfare of others). JP anticipated that such voluntary sharing together of various prized possessions of life would ensure a non-violent, voluntary and democratic transformation of the Indian society on the lines of the *sarvodaya* order.

TOTAL REVOLUTION

Total revolution (*sampurna kranti*) was the last intellectual intervention of JP in his unending quest to seek and establish such a socio-economic and political order in the country which would turn India into a democratic, federal, participatory, equitable and prosperous nation in the world. The concept of total revolution was for the first time evolved by Vinoba Bhave during the 1960s to articulate his desire for the need of a comprehensive movement in the country which would transform all the aspects of life in order to 'mould a new man ... to change human life and create a new world' (Bhave 1964b: 1). The idea was picked up by JP to call upon the people in 1975 to work for total revolution in order to stem the rot creeping into all aspects of public life and create a whole new world encompassing the basic elements of socio-economic and political order that he had been advocating in the name of *sarvodaya*.

The context of JP calling for the total revolution (see Narayan 1975) was provided by the growing authoritarianism in the functioning of the government machinery headed by Mrs Indira Gandhi. In fact, his call for *sampurna kranti* became the rallying cry for the movement against Indira Gandhi's government (Beteille 2008: 35). One of nefarious repercussions of such governance was the spreading of corruption in all aspects of political life in India. Hence, on the declaration of emergency in June 1975, JP found it compelling to call for the total revolution in the country aimed at transforming the whole gamut of social, economic, political, spiritual, educational and cultural life of the people. JP was convinced that piecemeal engineering would not suffice to bring about the desirable level and pace of holistic transformation in India, thereby necessitating the call for the total revolution. Through his call for

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total revolution, JP, therefore, not only appeared dissatisfied with having cosmetic changes in the outer set up of the socio-economic and political structures of power but also called for effecting and deepening an informed consciousness of the masses for ensuring the holistic transformations of the entire system. The essence of all such transformations would lie in restoring the basic spiritual foundations of all the aspects of human life in the country.

The concept of total revolution of JP aimed at reversing the tide of rot taking place in the political and economic system of the country ostensibly due to the concentration of political and economic powers in few hands, and restoring the sanctity of institutions and procedures in those spheres of life by decentralising such powers in the hands of the masses. In the sphere of political system, JP noted the inherent fallacies of the prevailing parliamentary system of government, as its basic characteristics such as electoral system, party-based political processes and increasing concentration of powers in the hand of one person, that is, the Prime Minister, are bound to convert the system into a corrupt, tyrannical and farcical one. Hence, in his conceptualisation of total revolution, JP was firm on reforming the electoral system in such a way that the people can vote in an incorruptible manner and in accordance with their free conscience. Moreover, in such a system, there would be no place for political parties and the potential concentration of powers in few hands would be effectively curbed by having greatest possible diffusion of political powers to various levels of government.

Like political power, JP was also convinced of the perverse effects of the concentration of economic power in the hands of few in the society. He, therefore, called for total recasting of the economic system of country as well. Arguing for a mixed economy framework for India, JP aspired that the economic dispensation of the country must be able to provide for the basic necessities of people like food, cloth and shelter. His idea of *sampattidaan* was nothing but a call for sharing together of one's wealth and economic resources in such a way that its utilisation benefits the larger sections of people rather than ensuring affluence for a few. JP visualised an economic order for the country where there would be progressive socialisation of the means of resources by way of establishing cooperative societies and voluntary associations to manage the resources with a view to ensure prosperity for all. Thus, even in the sphere of economic

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activities, JP's diagnosis of and cure for the ills appeared rooted in concentration and decentralisation of the powers, respectively. And, therefore, he suggested that the first and foremost task of the *sarvodaya* worker would be to 'diffuse political and economic power and decentralise the politico-economic structure' (Narayan 1978: 79). Indeed, decentralisation, along with people's participation was argued by JP as the panacea for all the rots which had become deep rooted in the politico-economic system of the country.

JP's call for executing the idea of total revolution in 1975 was accompanied by some sort of blueprint for the volunteers to carry out the implementation of the scheme of holistic transformations of Indian society. He exhorted the people to rise against the authoritarian and inimical policies and programmes of government of the day and persevere to push it back to its legitimate domain. He also called for the dissolution of the legislative bodies in the country as they had ceased to reflect the opinion of the people by going neck deep in all sorts of political and economic corruptions. JP also pointed out the problem of price rise as the target of total revolution, since it had the potential of turning the life of people into virtual poverty and starvation, keeping in view their inability to pay for the exorbitantly high prices of essential commodities. At the same time, he was also forthright in eradicating the existing social inequality in the country by putting a full stop to the discrimination amongst the people on the basis of religion and caste. In a nutshell, thus, the operationalisation of the idea of total revolution in 1975 encompassed within its fold almost all the major problems facing the people before embarking on the path of long term revolutionary transformations aimed at establishing the *sarvodaya* social order in the country.

In its operationalisation, however, the idea of total revolution, as advocated by JP, occasionally evoked misplaced perceptions in the minds of its practitioners. For instance, undoubtedly, it proved electrifying for the people and gave birth to a mammoth students' movement in many parts of the country with particular formidability in Bihar in 1974. But the public perception of the notion of total revolution appeared ambivalent as many construed it to be total subduing of *rajya shakti* or state power at the hands of the people. However, JP was quite categorical that he did not advocate the disappearance of all political power but, rather, the

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placement of it where it belongs, that is, in the hands of the people (Dalton 1986: 292). Similarly, few people tried to take recourse to some sort of violent methods also in carrying out the movement for total revolution. But JP was firm in his conviction that total revolution could be brought about only through peaceful and non-violent voluntary actions on the part of the people.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The life and thought of JP appears to be in a state of constant transformation owing to the fact that he never allowed his personality and mind to be closed to newer influences and experiences. Moreover, they represented JP's perceptions on the desirable as well as prevailing realities in the country. Right from the very beginning, JP's receptive mind became so welcoming to all sorts of ideas that when he got infatuated by the Marxian thoughts, he argued for revolutionary transformations in the Indian society on the pattern of socialist Russia. However, his return to India and the gradual exposition to the ideas of Gandhi, accompanied with his growing disenchantment with the theory and practice of Marxist thought, gave a new ideological orientation to his thoughts known as *sarvodaya*. Yet, the failure of the country to move in the direction suggested by JP and the increasingly authoritarian style of functioning of Mrs Indira Gandhi led JP to call for total revolution. But even his call for total revolution proved ephemeral and the country reverted back to the rule of Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1980. Thus, the conceptual interventions of JP in the realm of Indian political thought proved to be more of theoretical value than practical as 'JP was a dreamer and an idealist to a fault' (Devasahayam 2008: 7).

NOTES

1. For a lucid biographical account of JP, see Lal (1975).
2. For a lucid and representative critique of JP's plan for reconstruction of Indian polity, see Morris-Jones (1978: 97–106).

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7 Jawaharlal Nehru

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To examine the standing of Nehru as a pragmatic thinker.
- To explain Nehruvian inputs in understanding the structure of governance in India.
- To explore Nehru's ideas on planning.
- To describe the internationalist Nehru.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) was one of the few nationalist leaders who remained critical both in the freedom struggle and its aftermath. Politically baptised by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru was not a blind follower of his leader, but redefined the nationalist ideology as and when he deemed it fit. For instance, the Congress leadership was content with dominion status till the 1928 Calcutta Congress, though Nehru and his radical colleagues expressed annoyance. Because of his strong defence and mobilisation of support, the 1929 Lahore Congress accepted his demand for complete freedom and not dominion status. He was a scientific rationalist and held views contrary to the majority opinion even at the chagrin of the Congress leadership, including Gandhi. In the aftermath of India's independence, he, along with his colleagues who led the nationalist struggle, strove to guide India towards a socialistic pattern of society following a path based on his interpretation of socialism drawn on a mixed recipe of classical Marxism and a version of capitalism that evolved in India under the aegis of colonialism. Similarly, his foreign policy was also a unique blend of realism and ideology that seemed to have worked, presumably because of the 'distrust' among the major powers and generally vitiated circumstances of the cold war era. On the whole, Jawaharlal Nehru remained an icon not only during the nationalist struggle but also in its aftermath when he presided over India's destiny. Since this is a contextual study of Nehruvian socio-political ideas, the chapter is structured around those critical themes that remained close to Nehru's heart. Dialectically evolved, the Nehruvian ideas were also responses to the circumstances

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which Nehru confronted both as a freedom fighter and later as India's Prime Minister. Reiterating the basic argument of the book, the chapter is an analytical statement on Nehru's political thought by underlining the dialectics of its evolution and articulation in black and white. Nehru brought fresh air to the freedom struggle that was articulated ideologically by combining youthful zeal with inspiration from the successful Soviet experiment under Lenin's stewardship. He knew that it was not possible to blindly imitate the Soviet model in India for reasons connected with a peculiar capitalist development due largely to colonialism of the British variety. Nonetheless, his intervention both during the freedom struggle and afterwards when India became politically free, was creative enough to chart a course of action that was refreshing, and relevant.

BACKGROUND

Jawaharlal Nehru was born when British colonialism was at its peak. He had 'a sheltered and uneventful childhood' (Nehru 1941: 6). Like other politically conscious Indians, he 'was filled with resentment against the alien rulers ... who misbehaved with Indians' (ibid.) though he had no rancour against individual Englishmen. In fact, he admitted that 'in my heart, I rather admired the English' (ibid.). He was awestruck by his father, Motilal Nehru, one of the leading Congressmen before Gandhi emerged on India's political scene who was, according to him 'the embodiment of strength and courage and cleverness, far above all the other men I saw' (ibid.: 418). He also treasured the hope that when he grew up, he would like to be like his father. But Nehru was soon to be disillusioned. He was upset when Motilal Nehru took up 'a strong line against the Extremists of Bengal and Maharashtra', though Nehru found this position absolutely tenable given his father's 'grounding in law and constitutionalism' (ibid.: 7). Holding 'a constitutional view of politics' (ibid.), Motilal never appreciated the *swadeshi* and boycott movements because 'hard and extreme words lead nowhere unless they are followed by action appropriate to the language' (ibid.: 24). As a hardcore moderate, Motilal always looked to the West, argued Nehru and also thought that 'progress could come through an association with England' (ibid.: 23–24). There is no doubt that Nehru who

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looked up to his father for direction in life soon got disillusioned because the political views that Motilal held were contrary to what he espoused. The critic in Nehru, grounded in Marxists historical materialism, seemed to have guided his understanding of India's (and also international) political situation. He hardly deviated from this. What he decided was always reason-based. This was a pattern that one discerns in his political life. He was drawn to Gandhi and had also appreciated the Mahatma by saying that 'with all his greatness and his contradictions and power of moving masses, he is above the usual standards. One cannot measure him or judge him as we should others' (ibid.: 548). The same Nehru held views contrary to that of Gandhi when the latter dismissed industrialism as 'an evil for a poor country like India.' Nehru, however, felt that 'without industrialisation no country can have political or economic freedom and even cottage industries cannot develop to any large extent if economic freedom is absent.'[1] Despite Gandhi's vehement opposition, Nehru hailed industrialism, as he was convinced that industrialisation was absolutely necessary for development. Yet, Nehru, unlike his militant colleague, Subhas Chandra Bose, never pursued his differences with Gandhi to the extent of causing a split within the Congress. Despite the adverse ideological implications of aligning with Gandhi, the pragmatic Nehru participated whole-heartedly in the Gandhi-led freedom struggle, for he knew that the attainment of independence was prior to ideology. These instances are testimony of Nehru's inherent nature of appreciating reason-based arguments and efforts even if that meant opposition to those whom he held in high esteem, like his father and Gandhi. This was a pattern in his whole political life that one should not miss out while elaborating Nehru's political ideas.

THE PRAGMATIC THINKER

As a pragmatic thinker, Nehru realised that the problems inherited by the nation from the colonial period could not be 'solved by magic' (Nehru 1950; Parthasarathi 1986: 11). He was also acutely aware of the logistical difficulties involved in any abrupt transition from autocracy to democracy. What he proposed, therefore, was a gradual transition to 'a new India' with no radical departure

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from the past. Instead of entirely rejecting the old system of administration, he, for instance, endorsed a middle path which he explained in a public lecture of 1955:

> ...too much continuity will become static, will become weak and there will be no progress. [Similarly], too much change may shake-up and break-up the structure completely and then you have to pick up the threads of continuity again.… One has to balance change and continuity. (Nehru 1975[1955]: 53)

He was confident about his success because, as he argued, despite her diverse socio-economic and cultural circumstance, 'India is a geographical and economic entity, a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads' (Nehru 1989: 562). This was the crux of his approach to nation-building after independence that was reflective of the Nehruvian pragmatism, based on fine blending of reality with ideological aspirations.

Given his clear understanding of the historical processes, Nehru was aware that due to a crystallisation of peculiar socio-economic and political dynamics under colonialism, it was not possible for India to match with 'historical norm of development'. Colonialism did not allow the growth of the forces of modernity for obvious reasons. As Nehru (1989: 507) argued,

> ...India's normal development was arrested by the British power. The normal relationships of society could not adjust themselves and find an equilibrium, as all power was concentrated in the alien authority, which based itself on force and encouraged groups and classes [which] had long ago finished their role in history and would have been pushed aside by new forces if they had not been given foreign protection.

Two important points emerge: (*a*) Nehru was acutely aware that colonialism remained at the root of India's economic decadence, and (*b*) as a true believer of scientific socialism, he attributed the decadence to the lack of the growth of new social forces, opposed to the feudal mindset and supportive of modernity. The explanation, couched in historical terms, is drawn on his clear understanding of the historical processes that seemed to work in India due to colonialism. To Nehru (1989: 557), the modern mind was most critical in comprehending 'the sprit of the age' challenging the archaic views

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about society, polity and, above all, humanity. His endeavour was to consolidate the spirit of the age supportive of 'the modern mind [which] is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian [and] is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment' (Nehru 1989: 557). This is what lies at the core of his 'scientific approach' which is:

> ... adventurous and yet the critical temper of science, the search for truth and new knowledge, the refusal to accept anything without testing and trial, the capacity to change previous conclusions in the face of new evidence, the reliance of observed fact and not on pre-conceived theory, the hard discipline of the mind—all this is necessary for the application of science, but for life itself and the solution of its many problems. (ibid.: 512)

Nehru made a distinction between 'scientific method' and 'scientific approach': while the former is reason-based efforts, the latter meant 'a way of life, a process of thinking, a method of acting and associating with our fellowmen' (ibid.). The distinction, though subtle, is a nationalist statement of Nehru who, despite being an admirer of the West, never reconciled to the British rule in India because it lacked the scientific temper that, he defined, was based on 'a fearless search for truth, on the solidarity of man and even on the divinity of everything living, and on the free and cooperative development of the individual and the species, even to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth' (ibid.: 515). Hence, for him, nationalism, drawn on scientific approach to human problems, remained a hollow ideal unless linked with political freedom from colonialism. As a pragmatic thinker, he was not favourably inclined to blame the political authority for India's slavery. Although the British government survived by creating division among the communities, 'the success in this policy', argued Nehru (1941: 136), 'has been also the measure of the superiority [of the British] over those whom [it] exploited' [and hence] we ought not to be surprised at it. This was an introspection that Nehru shared with Gandhi who also felt that the British succeeded in India by simply playing one community against another. Nonetheless, Nehru seemed persuaded that the key to solving this problem was political freedom. He was opposed to the dominion status for India because continuity with:

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> ... the existing political and economic structure and merely wish to tamper with it here and there … [meant] sharing in the spoils and the third and controlling party inevitably plays the dominant role and hands out its gifts to the prize boys of its choice. (Nehru 1941: 137)

Hence, he argued strongly for complete freedom, the object of which was 'to make people realise that we were struggling for an entirely different political structure and not just an Indianised edition (with British control behind the scene) of the present order which Dominion Status signifies' (ibid.).

One of the foundational pillars of his political ideas was Marxism. Critical of 'the dogma of official communism in Russia', Nehru was drawn to the theory and philosophy of Marxism which taught him that 'the general character of social, political and intellectual life in a society is governed by its productive resources' (Nehru 1972–82: 121). His introduction to Marxism 'lightened up many a dark corner' of his mind and he was 'filled with a new excitement' (Nehru 1941: 362–63). He was also convinced that Marxism could solve 'the two related questions of the land and industry as well as almost every other major problem before the country' (ibid.). He learnt from Marxism that industrialism would not only ensure rapid economic development but also create socio-economic and political forces supportive of a new milieu and critical of the decadent interests upholding archaic and primordial values. Hence argued that:

> ...it can hardly be challenged that in the context of the modern world, no country can be politically and economically independent within the framework of international interdependence, unless it is highly industrialised and has developed its power resources to the utmost. Nor can it achieve or maintain high standards of living and liquidate poverty without the aid of modern technology in almost every sphere of life. An industrially backward country will continually upset the world equilibrium and encourage the aggressive tendencies of more developed countries. Even if it retains political independence, this will be nominal only, and economic control will tend to pass to others. (Nehru 1989: 407–08)

As a thinker with an acute sense of reality, Nehru knew that his uncritical support for industrialisation was likely to upset Gandhi and some of his colleagues upholding the view that it would

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invariably ruin the cottage industry and cause severe economic distress to the masses. Hence, he tempered his argument by saying that lack of economic strength would encourage the industrially developed nations to control India which 'will invariably upset [our] own small-scale economy which [we] have sought to preserve in pursuit of [our] own view of life' (Nehru 1989: 408). He also warned that 'an attempt to build-up a country's economy largely on the basis of cottage and small-scale industries is doomed to failure. It will not solve', he further added, 'the basic problems of the country to maintain freedom, not will it fit in with the world framework, except as a colonial appendage' (ibid.). Based on his appreciation of 'the spirit of age', Nehru welcomed rapid industrialisation of the country as perhaps the only appropriate option available to the nationalists. Support for cottage industry might satisfy one's emotions, but would neither contribute to India's economic well-being, nor would enable the country to become absolutely politically free. It was not, therefore, 'a matter of moral or aesthetic choice, [but was] a simple fact of modern life, determined globally by conditions of modern-day production' (Chatterjee 1986: 143–44). The fundamental points that come out of this section are two-fold: (*a*) guided by his interpretation of 'the scientific temper', Nehru hardly vacillated while charting out a specific course which India should follow, despite having annoyed Gandhi and his other colleagues in the nationalist movement; and (*b*) his strong defence of industrialism and modernity created conditions for these ideas to strike roots in India that blossomed fully in post-independent India when Nehru presided over its destiny.

STRUCTURE OF GOVERNANCE: NEHRUVIAN INPUTS

In independent India, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) succeeded the Indian Civil Service (ICS).[2] Despite its imperial roots, Indian political leaders chose to retain the structure of the ICS, presumably because of its efficient role in conducting Indian administration in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations supporting a particular regime. The traumatic experience of the years preceding independence was, however, favourably disposed towards its continuity, though during the discussion in

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the Constituent Assembly, the House was not unanimous on this issue. There was a strong group within the Constituent Assembly that never felt comfortable with the idea of continuity of this 'imperial civil service', as it was characterised to identify its nature and functioning. It was, therefore, agued that the 'the Civil Service as the Steel Frame ... enslaved us [and] they have been guilty of stabbing the Nation during our freedom struggle. [W]e should not, therefore,' as the argument goes, 'perpetuate what we have criticised so far' (Saksena 1999[1949]: 46). The argument opposing its continuity was based on its role as an ally of imperialism and Jawaharlal Nehru was undoubtedly, at the outset, its most vocal opponent. He felt that:

> ... no order can be built up in India so long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration and our public services. That spirit of authoritarianism is the ally of imperialism, and it cannot co-exist with freedom.... Therefore it seems to me quite essential that ICS and similar services must disappear completely, as such, before we can start real work on a new order. (Nehru 1941: 445)

He minced no words while criticising the steel frame. On one occasion, he went to the extent of suggesting that 'the Service is peculiarly susceptible, both individually and as a whole, to that old and yet somewhat modern disease, paranoia' (ibid.: 441) because 'inspite of their assuming assumption of being the trustees and guardians of the Indian masses, they knew little about them [and] they judged Indians from the sycophants and office seekers who surrounded them and dismissed others as agitators and knaves' (ibid.). On the whole, he believed that without dismantling 'the steel frame of the British government which holds together the ramshackle structure' (Nehru 1989: 502), no solutions could be available to the problems that India confronted.

As evident, Nehru was not at all comfortable with the steel frame and its functioning under colonial rule. This created a fissure between Nehru and 'the Iron Man of India', Vallabhbhai Patel, who did not seem to be as critical as Nehru was. Without being emotionally carried away, Patel defended the continuity of the Services as perhaps the most judicious thing to do while building the postcolonial India amidst crises of devastating nature. He knew that without the ICS, *Pax Britannica* would simply have been inconceivable. And he also realised that independent India

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needed a committed bureaucracy even more simply because of the multifarious responsibilities that state had to shoulder. Since they were 'patriotic, loyal, sincere [and] able' (Patel 1999: 48–52), Patel was persuaded to defend the continuity of the British bureaucracy, especially when the country was reeling under chaos towards the close of the colonial rule. He also attributed the success of the Constitution to the existence of an all India service by saying that, 'if you do not adopt this course, then do not follow this Constitution.... This Constitution is meant to be worked by a ring of service which will keep the country in tact. If you remove them', Patel (ibid.) thus apprehended, 'I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country.' Hence, Patel concluded that 'I need hardly [to] emphasise that an efficient, disciplined and contented service, assured of its prospects as a result of diligent and honest work, is a *sine qua non* of sound administration under a democratic regime even more than under an authoritarian rule.'

Even Jawaharlal Nehru who was very critical of the ICS for its role in sustaining the imperial rule in India,[3] seemed persuaded and supported its continuity for 'the security and stability of India ... including coping with the slaughter and its aftermath in Punjab, crushing opposition in Hyderabad, and containing it in Kashmir' (Nehru 1947: 793–95). Patel's views were translated into Article 311 of the Constitution of India that stated that no civil servant shall be dismissed or removed or reduced in rank except after an enquiry in which he has been informed of the charges and given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in respect of those charges.[4] So, an instrument that consolidated the imperial rule in India 'with so slight use of force' (Mason 1997: 345–46) survived in completely different political circumstances primarily because there was continuing support for it first from the British government and then the Congress government. Furthermore, its continuity did not pose any threat to the dominant classes that reigned supreme following the 1947 transfer of power in India. The new civil service, for all practical purposes, was, as a former bureaucrat comments, therefore 'the continuation of the old one with the difference that it was to function in a parliamentary system of government, accepting the undoubted primacy of the political executive which in turn was responsible to the people through their elected representatives in the legislature' (Alexander 1998: 62). Besides its structure, which is more or less an expansion of the steel frame,

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the continuity is at a deeper level. While the colonial civil servants had paternalistic attitude towards the people and ruled largely by negative discretionary powers, '[t]heir successors, noting the vast unmet development needs of the people, substituted positive discretionary powers of patronage and subsidies, reinforcing the colonial syndrome of dependency on the *mai-baap* state' (Sudarshan 1999: 111). Following independence, government functions have also expanded in scope and content. With the introduction of the parliamentary form of government and the setting up of people's institutions right down to the village level, there has been an inevitable rise in the level of expectations and performance has widened. People's institutions were set up with the objective of creating self-governing institutions at the village level.

PLANNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

Historically, the Congress party was persuaded by the arguments supporting planning for development. Contrary to Gandhi's explicit opposition to planned development, the Congress party showed ample interest in socialistic means, including planning and heavy industrialisation as 'essential to make revolutionary changes in the present economic and social structure of society and to remove gross inequalities' since 1929 (Pattabhi 1969: 43). Within two years, the 1931 Karachi Congress adopted a resolution insisting on state ownership of 'key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport' (ibid.). Nehru, in his 1936 Faizpur presidential address, argued strongly in favour of heavy industrialisation and coordination of human resources through planning.

Planning seems to have provided the Congress stalwarts with a platform to articulate different ideological positions. Drawing on their respective ideological leanings, Jawaharlal Nehru hailed industrialism while Gandhi opposed it, since he felt that instead of contributing to the general welfare, machine civilisation would not only expose Indians to a worse kind of exploitation but also lead to a general degradation of human life. Although Nehru and Gandhi were poles apart on occasions, the former, unlike his militant colleague Subhas Chandra Bose, did not go overboard to annoy Gandhi because he was acutely aware of the critical role of the

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Mahatma in India's freedom struggle. So, the controversy involving Gandhi and Nehru vis-à-vis planning and industrialisation was just a signpost indicating the tension, which was most likely in view of the Congress effort to create an anti-British platform incorporating even contradictory ideologies. By making a case for planning and industrialisation, there is no doubt that Nehru ushered in a new era in the Indian independence struggle.[5]

The detailed description of the evolution of planning is illustrative of Nehru's uncritical faith in planning, though he acknowledged that planning was to be guided by what he characterised as 'integrated planning'. Hence he observed,

> ...the Planning Commission has performed an essential task, without which it could not have progressed.... We are a federal structure and it has served to bring the various states together and have integrated planning. If it had not been there, the central government could not have done its job because immediately difficulties would have arisen that the central government was encroaching the rights of the States. (Nehru 1963)

The principle that governs economic planning is that 'the state shall take an active, indeed the decisive, role in the economy; by its own acts of investment and enterprise, and by its various controls—inducements and restrictions—over the private sector, the state shall initiate, spur and steer economic development' (Myrdal 1968: 709). Planning represents an attitude. It serves, as Myrdal characterises, 'as a rationalisation for interventionist practices' (ibid.: 714). Economic system can, thus, be moved in a desired direction by means of 'intentionally planned and rationally coordinated state policies' (ibid.). The argument that Nehru put forward seemed divorced from reality of India which was so diverse and fractured and, thus, it was difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at a consensus on the role of planning. He knew that getting his idea of the planning commission approved by the parliament and state assemblies was a damn difficult task. Hence, he was forced to constitute the planning commission through an executive order in 1950. The first jolt that he received was in June 1950, when his finance minister, John Matthai resigned complaining that the planning commission with Nehru as its chairperson emerged as 'a parallel cabinet' (Zachariah 2004: 190). Nonetheless, the planning commission was hailed as an instrument for overall development

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of the country, though the critics were doubtful whether it would succeed, since development was not merely 'a technical act'(Myrdal 1968: 714), but a politically articulated response to socio-economic problems as well. Nehru was perhaps aware of this. The planning commission was, thus, conceptualised not in strict Leninist terms, but in terms of Fabian Socialism which meant that it was a system 'that worked on gradualism, by permeation, by compromise and by advice from think-tanks, academics and technocrats' (Zachariah 2004: 190). This is what explains the survival of the planning commission that certainly failed to accomplish the goal, though it still survives. Nehru's insistence on planning also brought out his unflinching faith in scientific temper. The planning commission might not have satisfied all, especially the Gandhians, and there was no doubt that it functioned and devised plans and programmes in accordance with reason based justification. Science and development were dialectically linked. Science, as Nehru understood, was not merely a device, it was also a mindset supportive of 'rational' and 'progressive' activities. It was not, therefore, surprising that 'many of the personnel who came to be closely associated with the planning of industrialisation were men who were closely involved in the practice of science' (Zachariah 2005: 236). In terms of the actual rate of growth, the contribution of the planning commission may not be phenomenal. What it produced was 'a sense that ... the national government was tackling problems with a vision and vigour the imperial government had not possessed' (Brown 2004: 242). It also encouraged Nehru and his colleagues in the planning commission 'to advance more ambitiously towards a national reconstruction interpreted in social as well as economic terms' (ibid.).

THE DILEMMA OF A DEMOCRAT

Nehru remains 'a much-admired enigma' (Zachariah 2004: 259). There seems to be a complete break with the nationalist Nehru when he became the Prime Minister of India. Much of his radicalism was tempered by the responsibilities of his office. As the head of the government, he tolerated 'tendencies' which he would have seriously challenged as 'reactionary' during his nationalist phase.

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The Congress party that he led was a coalition of conflicting tendencies and Nehru 'appears to have been particularly adept at locking himself into coalitions with his opponents rather than his allies' (Zachariah 2004: 259). The logic was simple. For Nehru, so long as these reactionary elements remained with him, he could check them. As he himself was reported to have mentioned that:

> ... most of Ministers are reactionary and scoundrels; but as long as they are my ministers, I can keep some check on them. If I were to resign, they would be the Government and they would unleash the forces that I have tried ever since I came to power to hold in check. (Nehru, quoted in Zachariah 2004: 260)[6]

Given his critical role in the nationalist movement, it was possible for Nehru to contain and also combat these tendencies which, he found, were potentially dangerous for postcolonial India. And, Nehru remained at the helm of affairs largely due to an accommodative strategy regardless of ideological affinity, in the interest of the nation.

Nehru's image as a democrat seemed to have been tainted when the new government embarked on restructuring the postcolonial state. India inherited a state that was divided into the British–Indian provinces and a huge number of princely semi-autonomous states. The difficulty arose with regard to 565 princely states, though most of them, barring three, agreed to join federal India. These three states were Junagadh Hyderabad and Kashmir. The Hindu-dominated Junagadh was a tiny state in Kathiawad region which was ruled by a Muslim prince who decided to join Pakistan. Indian cabinet sent the army to take over the state. After a brief encounter with Indian troops, the ruler fled to Pakistan and Junagadh acceded to India only after a referendum that overwhelmingly endorsed accession to India. Hyderabad was ruled by Nizam who was also in favour of integrating with Pakistan. Like Junagadh, Hyderabad was also encircled by areas where Hindus constituted a majority. Despite Nizam's clear views on this, geopolitics were thus against him. In September, 1948, the Indian army conducted an operation and Hyderabad was incorporated into the Indian union. However, Kashmir was not easy to tackle. After independence, the ruler of Kashmir, Hari Singh, was keen to remain independent which none in Nehru's cabinet endorsed. Following the attack by the Pathan tribals from the North West Frontier Province, the Kashmiri ruler

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was forced to invite Indian troops for protection. This created conditions in which Hari Singh had no alternative but to sign the treaty of accession with India. For Nehru, incorporation of Kashmir was an ideological victory in two ways: (*a*) the accession of a Muslim-majority state would erode the legitimacy and rationale of Pakistan that was constituted on Jinnah's idea of Hindus and Muslims as being two separate nations; and (*b*) it would also strengthen Nehru's vision of India as a non-sectarian society rather than a Hindu nation (Zachariah 2004: 178). So, Kashmir was not merely 'the geographical frontier of secular India, it also became the ideological frontier' (Akbar 2008).

To achieve a stable Kashmir, Nehru put his trust in an alliance with Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference that seemed to have had a solid mass base. Tension simmered and Abdullah lost Nehru's confidence. An intelligence report accusing Abdullah of conspiring with Pakistan led him to prison and caused irreparable damage to Kashmir's integration with India. Nehru's image as a democrat seemed to have fizzled out when he replaced the popular Abdullah government by a puppet government, led by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed because the latter unconditionally agreed to join India. Furthermore, although he internationalised the issue, he was not keen to abide by the direction of the United Nations (UN) when it suggested for a plebiscite in the valley fearing that the outcome might not be favourable. Here too, *realpolitik* seemed to have prevailed over his ideological commitment for democracy. One can easily justify Nehru's opposition for plebiscite by referring to the compulsion of national integration that he privileged even at the cost of undermining his ideological faith. Nonetheless, Kashmir's accession to India, just like the other two princely states of Junagadh and Hyderabad, clearly brings out Nehru's dilemma as a democrat when he seemed to have stood by tendencies challenging his core beliefs for which he fought relentlessly.

While pursuing his nation-building project, Nehru seemed to have sacrificed his democratic values—as he handled the Kashmir problem—for a bigger cause. His sincere commitment to democracy was further eroded in 1959 when he was instrumental in dismissing the democratically elected E.M.S. Namboodiripad-led Communist government. This 1959 dismissal is an oft-quoted incident to show that Nehru's faith in democracy was more cosmetic than real. When the Communist Party formed the government after the 1957 state

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assembly election, Nehru accepted this as an appropriate democratic outcome of a properly held election, though he was hostile to Indian Communists in the early years of independence, when he thought that they were primarily theorists ignorant of the Indian conditions and involved in destructive activities at a time when all Indians should be united to ensure stability in the new nation. Nehru's main grievances against the Kerala government was, as S. Gopal informs, that they had created an atmosphere in which those critical of the Communist Party had little sense of security, and many had the feeling that the government did not treat all parties and groups impartially (Gopal 1989: 350). A serious controversy sparked-off in Kerala in 1959 with the passing of the Education Act that led to death in Trivandrum as a result of police firing. This was an opportunity for Nehru to intervene to placate the interest of the faction-ridden local Congress party. He advised his fellow workers to demand for a fresh election or resignation of the Namboodiripad's ministry. None of these demands were conceded by the Communist Party which led Nehru's cabinet to dismiss the elected state government. This was a decision which Nehru claimed, 'was hurled upon us by circumstances' (quoted in ibid.: 355). But it was, as he further recognised, 'a bad precedent which went against the democratic conventions which he, more than anyone else, was trying to establish in India.'[7] Nonetheless, the decision, despite being characterised as 'an inescapable step', put Nehru in bad light. It could have been avoided had Nehru not acted, as contemporary media report suggests, protecting narrow party advantages. The charge gained credibility in the light of the 1960 assembly election when the Congress Party won 63 seats in an assembly of 108 members. The Kerala episode also suggests that the high priest of democracy was not hesitant to sacrifice even his own ideological values and principles for partisan aims. Here, Nehru acted merely as a party activist ignoring his own ideological faith. Hence, he 'arrived at a decision which he knew to be wrong' (ibid.: 356), and yet failed to restrain himself presumably because he, as the leader of the Congress Party, pursued a goal, however narrow it might be, even if it meant a serious dent on his image as a democrat.

There is one striking similarity between Nehru's endeavour in integrating truant princely rulers and later in disciplining the Kerala Communists, namely, that he was hardly hesitant in sacrificing

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the democratic values that he held so dearly. Undoubtedly, ideology took a backseat in the interest of 'nation-building' in the first instance and 'compulsion of circumstances' in the second. This shows Nehru in a refreshing light. So long as he fought for the nationalist cause, he was uncompromising in his ideological commitments since it gave him the required political mileage. Once he was in the saddles of power, he perhaps realised how difficult it was to become a stickler of ideology which, instead of cementing a bond, could be devastating for the party in power. The apparent reversal in Nehru's ideological position is also illustrative of the extent to which he was 'a loner' among his colleagues in post-independent India. Unable to persuade his colleagues to appreciate the values for which he fought, Nehru, as a disciplined party worker, diluted his stance considerably for a wider goal. He was pragmatic too, by insisting that value-based politics could have been suicidal at a point when India was consolidating herself as an independent nation amidst various kinds of odds. So, on the whole, these episodes are illustrative of some kind of distortions in Nehru's ideological commitment to democracy; they, nonetheless, have identified the complex interrelationship between ideology and *realpolitik* especially when the author of an ideology, involved in *realpolitik*, is expected to translate that ideology into action.

INTERNATIONALIST JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

One aspect that was most striking in Nehru's political thinking was his approach to international issues. During the nationalist phase, he participated in various international conferences to champion India's cause for freedom. He also felt that international opinion in the favour of India's struggle for independence needed to be created to put pressure on the British government. The appointment of the Cripps Mission during the war was undoubtedly a response to the international pressure for a constitutional solution to the Indian problem. It was expected that Nehru with his keen interests in international relations was to translate his ideas on foreign affairs as soon as he had an opportunity. It was, therefore, not merely coincidental that Nehru became independent India's first foreign minister, besides being its first prime minister. As a principled

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thinker, he set in motion some of his fundamental ideas on foreign policies in his *The Discovery of India* which are as follows:

> *First*, there seems no alternative between world conquest and world association.… The old division and the quest for power politics have little meaning today and do not fit it with our environment, yet they continue. (Nehru 1989: 540)
>
> *Second*, cooperation can only be on a basis of equality and mutual welfare, on a pulling-up of the backward nations and people to a common level of well-being and cultural advancement, on an elimination of racialism and domination. (ibid.)
>
> *Third*, no nation or no people are going to tolerate domination and exploitation by another, even though this is given some more pleasant name. Nor will they remain indifferent to their own poverty and misery when other parts of the world are flourishing. That was only possible when there was ignorance of what was happening elsewhere. (ibid.)

As evident, these principles reflected Nehru's crusade against international imbalances due largely to 'the domination and exploitation' by a few powerful nations over the rest. Besides setting the tone of his approach to global politics, these principles were also attempts at articulating an alternative vision that Nehru nurtured sincerely while devising India's foreign policy or addressing international issues. What dominated his concern were the appalling living conditions in a majority of the Afro-Asian nations due to colonialism that crippled their growth for obvious reasons. These principles were Nehru's endeavour for creating and sustaining an independent, and also powerful, voice for these nations. As he argued,

> ...hundred of millions of Asia and Africa . . . have become increasingly conscious of themselves and their destiny, and at the same time are also world conscious.… They are nationalistic but this nationalism seeks no domination over, or interference with, others. They welcome all attempts at world cooperation and the establishment of an international order.… Large parts of Asia and Africa consist of an awakened, discontented, seething humanity, no longer prepared to tolerate existing conditions. (ibid.: 546–47)

The rise of the Afro-Asian countries as independent blocs in world politics was consolidated in Nehru's policy of non-alignment

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which meant avoidance of alliance with either of the two super-powers, namely, the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The guiding principle was the *Panchsheel* or the five principles of peaceful coexistence that emerged out of an agreement between India and China in 1954. These five principles were:

1. Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
2. Mutual non-aggression.
3. Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
4. Equality and mutual benefit.
5. Peaceful coexistence.

The Non-Aligned group made its first public appearance in the 1955 Bandung (Indonesia) conference. The aim of the conference was to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation, and to oppose colonialism or neo-colonialism by the US or the Soviet Union or any other imperialist nation. The following 10-Point declaration, incorporating the principles of the UN Charter, is a reiteration of some of the principles that Nehru held so dear during his long political career:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations.
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
3. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small.
4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.
5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself, singly or collectively, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations.
6. (i) Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve any particular interests of the big powers, and
   (ii) Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.

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7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties' own choice, in conformity with the charter of the United Nations.
9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.
10. Respect for justice and international obligations.

In the cold war era, Non-Alignment, based on the five principles of *Panchsheel*, was perhaps the realistic and pragmatic way of protecting India's interest as well. Conceptually, it was a master strategy because it provided an independent voice of former colonies in the Afro-Asian region, though it might not have been appropriate given the critical importance of support from the developed West for development. Both the superpowers were apprehensive of the Non-Aligned countries, at least, at the outset. Despite not being part of any formal military alliances of the superpowers, the Non-Aligned nations had to dilute their stance considerably for practical reasons when the much needed help was not available. So, given the obvious weaknesses of these former colonies that constituted the movement, Non-Alignment, as a strategy, never became as effective as Nehru would have expected. Nonetheless, it was a refreshing approach to international relations that sought to redefine relations among nations in the context of the cold war. Furthermore, it also translated into action 'the choked voice' of the largest section of humanity in the face of the strongest opposition of the developed West. Besides emotional gratification, Non-Alignment brought the Afro-Asian countries under one platform that not only initiated meaningful dialogues, but also various kind of socio-economic exchanges among them. In this sense, these countries remained aligned among themselves, but Non-Aligned vis-à-vis the outsiders.

Nehru's Non-Alignment or neutralism also meant that 'he was well-positioned to mediate when hostilities began' (Zachariah 2004: 201). His intervention seeking to thwart the 1956 Suez and later Hungary crises received world acclaim. Nehru was shocked at the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt and condemned the

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attack by saying that 'this was naked aggression, a reversion to colonialism, a violation of the UN Charter, and could not be tolerated' (quoted in Brown 2004: 263). American intervention finally led to a ceasefire and the end of the crisis, though Nehru's role was significant in mobilising international opinion against this brutal attack by the Anglo-French combination for hegemony in Egypt. Similarly, the Soviet attack in Hungary provoked Nehru to speak against Russian imperialism, reiterating that Hungarian uprising was largely a popular nationalist revolt. The situation vis-à-vis Hungary remained the same despite Nehru's strong criticism. In both Suez and Hungarian crises, Nehru did not seem to achieve what he strove for. And yet his role was appreciated not because of his sincerity to the cause of 'peaceful coexistence', but also because his clearly defined stance against coercive intervention by powerful nations. As a thinker who had fundamental contribution to international relations, Nehru hardly vacillated in championing what he felt just and right. It was not difficult for him, therefore, to condemn the Soviet attack despite being ideologically closer to the Soviet Union. He was, however, soon to be disillusioned with the 1962 Chinese attack on India that caused serious embarrassment to India's Prime Minister, who now realised that commitment to peaceful coexistence was perhaps most hollow unless matched by military preparedness.

An assessment of Nehru's ideas on foreign affairs suggests that he was 'a romantic thinker' who was at his best while playing with lofty ideas, disregarding perhaps the brutal reality of international politics just immediately after decolonisation. The newly independent countries were not so strong and the former colonial powers did not come to terms with the changed international reality. Yet, Nehru succeeded in building a powerful Non-Aligned bloc of countries on the basis of *Panchsheel* that steered a new course of action in the days to come. What is striking was Nehru's unflinching faith in those five principles that sought to create a world, perhaps an ideal world, in which animosity among nations was absent. In this sense, Nehru was a visionary who looked beyond his age by seeking to build a new world, free from tension, war and human deprivation. He was, it seems, an anachronistic leader who would have flourished in contemporary world when the contour of international politics is being radically redefined by shifting its locus away from national boundary to non-national

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actors, the global civil society activists, for instance, insisting on peace, tranquillity and amicable solution to all international disputes through discussion and dialogues. So, Nehru's inputs might not have succeeded in attaining the Nehruvian goal when they were articulated, they, nevertheless, set in motion new dynamics in international politics that blossomed fully in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

There are two different, and also interlinked, phases in the evolution of Nehru's political ideas. The first is the nationalist phase in which Nehru sought to introduce socialistic ideas in opposition to Gandhi and his followers within the Congress, despite following the Mahatma for practical purposes. What was striking in Nehru was that unlike his militant colleagues in the Congress, he pursued his line of thinking in a very tactful manner that alienated neither Gandhi nor those adhering strictly to the Gandhian ideology. The second phase began when Nehru took over power in independent India after the British withdrawal. He consolidated 'a nation, trained it for democracy, constructed a model for economic development and set the country on the path to growth' (Gopal 1989: 473). His political practice after 1947 was largely based on 'the intellectual arguments' that he developed while combating colonialism. These two phases, though dialectically linked, are statements of two qualitatively different periods of India's history. In the first phase, he was involved in a struggle against the British, while in the second phase he struggled with the issues of the most appropriate means for social and economic reconstruction in a society marked by poverty and illiteracy, and studying countries that seemed to have undergone the same experiences, he led India 'down the route of state-sponsored and engineered change' (Brown 2004: 344). This is the crux of the Nehruvian project that made the state singularly responsible for India's development along with what Nehru defined as 'the socialistic pattern of society.' The true historical success of Nehru's rule, it has been argued, thus:

> ... lay not in a dissemination of democratic idealism, but in the establishment of the state at the core of India's society [that was]

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> inflated … to infiltrate the everyday lives of Indians, proclaiming itself responsible for everything they could desire: jobs, ration cards, educational places, security and cultural recognition. (Khilnani 2004: 41)

This created a paradox because the rise of the hegemonic state had the potential of weakening its democratic foundation that Nehru so assiduously nurtured. Furthermore, the state, despite being so strong, had to compromise with the well-entrenched vested interests in vast rural areas while seeking to implement, for instance, the radical land reform programmes that infuriated even the Congress bigwigs indignant of Nehru's socialistic schemes for development. This was a contradiction that Nehru seemed to have foreseen given the peculiar socio-economic circumstances in which India was placed after freedom. As a pragmatic thinker, he did not push the development schemes as strongly as was expected, presumably because of his concern for creating and also strengthening 'the thread of unity' among differently placed socio-economic communities.

Nehru's political ideas are powerful statements on India's evolution as an independent nation–state after a protracted struggle against colonialism. Drawn on his experiences, both during the nationalist phase and its aftermath, Nehru contributed to a corpus of thinking that charted an independent course for India's growth and development. These ideas, critical to the making of modern India, with its strength and weaknesses, remained integral to Nehru's search for an appropriate strategy for India that was a victim of long-drawn colonialism, supportive of an equally decadent society drawing on declining feudal relations. Besides contributing to India's rise as an independent nation, Nehru was also credited with injecting liberal views of politics which did not mean confrontation but negotiation and dialogue in camaraderie spirit. In today's context when politics is reduced to confrontation, the Nehruvian approach seems to be a persuasive alternative seeking to evolve views and ideas which are not only meaningful but also relevant to a divided world. So, Nehru who brought refreshing ideas to the nationalist movement and later, as prime minister, set India to a path of growth, based on a creative interpretation of socialistic values and principles, remains significant in today's neo-liberal world because of his transcendental political thought that continues to inspire alternative discourses.

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NOTES

1. *National Herald*, 21 June 1939, quoted in Gopal (1972–82: 386–87).
2. For a succinct account of the evolution of the Civil Service in India both during the British rule and its aftermath, see Rao (2004 [1968]: 708–23).
3. As late as 1934, Nehru characterised the Indian civil service as 'neither Indian nor civil nor service [and] it is thus essential that the ICS and similar services disappear completely' (Nehru 1941: 445).
4. For a detailed discussion in the Constituent Assembly during the preparation and finally acceptance of Article 311, see Rao (2004 [1968]: 713–23).
5. The author has dwelt on this aspect of the freedom struggle in Chakrabarty (1992: 275–87).
6. J.D. Bernal, the scientist who met Nehru in Beijing in 1954 made this statement, and it is quoted in Zachariah (2004: 260).
7. Nehru to B.R. Rao on 30 July 1959, quoted in Gopal (1989: 355).

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8 Muhammad Iqbal

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To illustrate the paradoxes in the life of Iqbal.
- To assess the political ideas of Iqbal.
- To explain Iqbal's notion of pan-Islamism.
- To analyse Iqbal's ideas on Pakistan.

Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938), like Rabindranath Tagore, was basically a poet whose forays in the domain of socio-political theorisation seemed to have been facilitated by his deep interest in and responses to the social and political happenings and movements in the country and abroad. However, barring this incidental affinity between the personalities of the two poet–philosophers, the core of their socio-political thoughts appears to be diametrically opposite. For instance, while both began their philosophical pilgrimage with singing paeans in the honour of Mother India, very soon the trajectory of their perspectives on nationalism took such an amazing turn that Tagore became an icon of internationalism or cosmopolitanism whereas Iqbal turned out to be a staunch advocate of narrow Muslim nationalism. Consequently, in case of Tagore, 'his voice stood for India and yet it had a vitality which cannot be confined to one particular country or tradition, and as such it reverberates with cosmopolitanism' (Mehta 1996: 261). On the contrary, about Iqbal, a veteran analyst of Indian political thinking wrote,

> [I]n the beginning, Iqbal composed poems full of patriotism and love of the motherland. But later, the ardent nationalist turned into a religious fanatic, whose sole objective was to safeguard the interests of his co-religionists even at the cost of the unity of the Indian nation. Hence, Iqbal became well-known for his ideas on Muslim nationalism and his views on religion and politics. He again and again advised the Muslims to consolidate on a religious basis. He propagated the theory of the Muslims as a separate nation. Rejecting the secular Indian nationalism and calling it Hinduised, Iqbal launched the separatist movement among the Muslims by

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> advocating narrow Muslim nationalism or what may be called communalism. (Appadorai 2002: 246)

Thus, such a U-turn in the conceptualisation of an academically trained intellectual appears quite enigmatic, necessitating a contextualised study of the life and thinking of the poet. The chapter, therefore, attempts to provide a critical review of the evolution and nature of the main components of the socio-political ideas of Iqbal. Such a survey of his ideas ought to be done with special reference to the contextual imperatives which had motivated him to reach an altogether different destination than what was supposed to be at the time of the beginning of his intellectual journey.

A LIFE IN COMPLETE TURNAROUND

The life of Muhammad Iqbal seems to be a life of complete turnaround, ostensibly due to the factors apparently having their roots in the policy of divide and rule followed by the colonial rulers from the beginning of the twentieth century in India. Iqbal was born on 22 February 1873 at Sialkot in Punjab (now in Pakistan) in a family the ancestors of which were Kashmiri Brahmans some 300 years back. Iqbal appeared to be proud of his lineage whose reflections could be found in his poetic compositions. Having attained his early education in a traditional Muslim religious school, he took admission in the Sialkot Mission School to complete his matriculation. His urge for higher studies apparently took him to Lahore where he joined the Government College and secured a graduation degree from it. Later, on completing his Master's degree, he was selected a lecturer in the Oriental College, Lahore to teach History and Philosophy, in addition to English. However, after working as a lecturer for a few years, he left for Munich in 1905 to pursue his doctoral research.

Iqbal's stay in Europe proved to be a turning point in moulding his intellectual orientation towards various aspects of both local as well as global happenings. On his return to India in 1908, Iqbal was a person with:

> ... a new world view. He began to reflect on religious issues in the wake of the European aggression against the Muslim countries, including Turkey and Persia. To face the western challenge, he, like

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> his contemporaries Maulana Azad, the Ali Brothers, Mohammad and Shaukat, and Hasrat Mohani, advocated pan-Islamism as the political goal of the Islamic world. He began to regard himself as Islam's messenger or *Shair-e-Islam*, and his poetry became a vehicle of Islamic thought. (Datta 2002: 5034)

Thus, his brief sojourn in Europe seemed to have transformed Iqbal from a staunch nationalist into the *Shair-e-Islam* whose only passion now appeared to have become to be the saviour of Islam and its followers.

After his return from Europe, the sequence of events in the life of Iqbal did not appear to be guided by his sole discretion. For instance, on returning to India, he was offered a Professorship by the Oriental College where he had taught previously but he refused and went for practicing law on the advice of his friends. But his legal practice did not turn out to be a success story and, as a result, much of his time now was utilised in his poetic compositions. What was surprising, however, was the fact that Iqbal did not get enticed by the realm of politics at all during this time. For instance, 'when the All India Muslim League session took place in Lahore in 1920, Iqbal did not take care to attend it even though the meeting was held at the Gulab Theatre just opposite his residence' (Datta 2002: 5035). His seemingly incidental entry into politics came in 1925, when, on the advice of his admirers, he contested and won the election to the Punjab Legislative Council and remained a member of the Council till 1928. Thereafter, he presided over the Allahabad session of the All India Muslim League in 1930. In his presidential address, he advocated the idea of two separate administrative areas in India, one for Muslims and one for Hindus as a solution of the persisting differences between the two communities. His last political assignment happened to be his nomination as a delegate to the second and the third Round Table Conferences held in London to deliberate on the proposed constitutional reforms for India. The last few years of his life were spent under the shadow of deep sorrow caused by the death of his wife, followed by a long spell of bad health. He died on 21 April 1938 in Lahore after a brief illness. However, in surveying the main aspects of his life, and in a perceptible study on the social and political thought of Iqbal, the seemingly most intriguing as well as quite pertinent issue remains to be an analysis of the circumstances and events which led to the

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total transformations in his intellectual frame from being a staunch nationalist having faith in the secular and composite cultural traditions of India to that of a parochial visionary eager to get the country partitioned to get a separate homeland for Muslims.

POLITICAL IDEAS OF IQBAL

Being a poet at the core of his heart, Iqbal did not appear to be a political theorist articulating his political contemplation in a systematic and organised manner. Hence, much of the political ideas of Iqbal were articulated in his poems, in addition to the numerous lectures delivered by him at various times and in varying capacities. Moreover, in his poetic compositions and lectures, he did not seem to propound any profound theory or put forward an ideology. What he apparently did was to articulate his feelings and emotions enmeshed in abstract eulogy of certain things, persons or ideas, on the one hand, and formulation of some sort of probable responses to the issues and problems bothering the minds of the enlightened Indians of the time, on the other. Hence, at times, there appears some degree of inconsistency and contradictions in the ideas of Iqbal as they were articulated in a particular context and in response to a particular problem. Yet, the common theme which seemed to be pervading the main body of political thinking of Iqbal was his undying passion to bring about a subtle revival of the past glory and vibrancy of Islamic thought and action. It was this passion which eventually boiled down to calling for the creation of a separate state of Pakistan which could 'become a laboratory for revision and reconstruction of Islam as visualised by Iqbal' (Puri 2003: 492).

VIEWS ON NATIONALISM

Reflecting the context-driven fluctuations in the political views of Iqbal, nationalism happens to be one such notion on which there appears to be a wide variation in his views over a period of time. Beginning his poetic forays as a believer in the personality of Mother India, Iqbal remained a fan of Indian nationalism till his

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departure for Europe in 1905. However, owing to various influences of European ideas, notions and incidents, he developed a sort of new-found love for Islamic religion and people which paved for the way for the shaping of ideas on the lines of pan-Islamism and turning him into a foe of the concept of territorial nationalism.

A perusal of the early poetries of Iqbal would not convince a person that he was the same Iqbal who vied for the partition of India on religious lines to create the state of Pakistan. Initially, Iqbal appeared as a poet of Indian nationalism, who would admire and preach innate cultural virtues, composite nature of the socio-religious life of the people and his exhortations of Hindu gods and incarnations as the ideal for all the people irrespective of their religion if they happened to be residents of India. In 1904, eulogising the notion of India in superlative terms, for example, *Sare Jahan se Achchha Hindustan Hamara* (India is the best in the whole world), Iqbal represented the voice of Indian nationalists who were bent upon decrying the British rule in India by highlighting the inherent creative properties of the country. In another poem, *Naya Shivala*, Iqbal was categorical in calling upon his countrymen to consolidate their affection for Indian-ness by shedding their parochial outlook based on primordial affinities and developing a broader perspective on the notion of India.

Iqbal's love for nationalism as reflected in his early poetic compositions dissipated once he started experiencing the nationalist, rationalist and secular view of life on the one hand, and the seemingly inimical policies of various European countries towards Muslims in certain parts of the world, on the other. Apparently sensing some sort of danger to Islam and its followers in various places across the globe, Iqbal turned to be a votary of pan-Islamism, claiming that China, Arabia and India are ours: 'We are Moslems, and the whole world is ours'. He started denouncing European values such as territorial nationalism, atheist socialism and secularism and condemned the proponents of these ideas. For instance, he chided Machiavelli for arguing for separation of politics from religion, calling him as messenger of Satan (Dar 1944: 254). Thus, the motivation for his strong anti-national feeling appeared to be rooted more in his fear of threat to pan-Islamism as it would render the whole idea of pan-Islamism redundant, rather than any subtle antipathy to political discourses in Europe.

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Subsequently, Iqbal's critique of nationalism became quite scathing. To him, nationalism was a subtle form of idolatry (Iqbal 1961: 26). He argued that the idea of territorial nationalism betrays the innate unity among human being and absolves the pernicious distinctions of caste, creed, colour and economic status in society, thereby undermining the idea of an Islamic worldview. He, in fact, wrote that when he realised that the conception of nationalism based on the differences of race and country, was beginning to overshadow the world of Islam also and that Muslims were in danger of giving up the universality of their ideal in favour of narrow patriotism and false nationalism, he felt it his bounden duty to exhort them to be aware of the dangers of nationalism and try to get back to their ancient roots to reclaim the ground lost to others. Iqbal's apprehensions about the idea of nationalism also emanated from his perceived danger that it would divide Muslims in various parts of the world on numerous worldly grounds such as culture, race, territorial affinity, clan, tribe and political affection to one's motherland or fatherland. As Iqbal had started arguing for a pan-Islamic worldview, he was sure that the rise and consolidation of European brand of nationalism would definitely loosen the grip of the Islamic religion on people and hamper the realisation of some sort of spiritual and religious unity amongst Muslims in all parts of the world. Hence, he construed that the advocacy of the idea of nationalism was a ploy on the part of the imperialist countries to weaken Islam by ingraining the poison of nationalism, as it would destroy the innate fraternity amongst the Muslims all across the globe (Iqbal 1973: 204).

Finally, the demonising of nationalism at the hands of Iqbal was also prompted by the dynamics of the internal socio-cultural and political circumstances in the country. He appeared convinced that the fruition of the idea of a pan-Indian nationalism would inevitably accompany the emergence of pre-dominant position for Hindus in the country given the demographic composition of India. Such an eventuality would never have been acceptable to Iqbal as he had been arguing for the elevation of position of the Muslims as the people born to rule over the world having established a pan-Islamic world order. Thus, the critique of nationalism by Iqbal was factored by a number of both external as well as domestic factors, and the way out of the idea of nationalism seemed to the notion of pan-Islamism to Iqbal.

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PAN-ISLAMISM

Pan-Islamism, to Iqbal, was a comprehensive idea aimed at bringing about a sort of fraternity and unity amongst Muslims in various parts of the world irrespective of their geographical location. In place of territorial nationalism, he argued for the adoption of pan-Islamism as a humanitarian notion defying the barriers put up by irritants like race, caste, geography or other worldly barriers. As has been noted, 'Iqbal's passionate commitment to Islamic universalism, his notation of separate Muslim identity and citizenship and his complete disregard of territorial nationalism provide sound clue to an understanding of his political conduct' (Datta 2002: 5035). In fact, during the late 1920s, he delivered a series of lectures to put forward his opinion on the issue of universality of Islamic brotherhood and the need for the pan-Islamism in the world.

Providing an eloquent reinterpretation of the basic tenets of Islam, Iqbal tried to reorient the crux of Islam from being a religious faith of the people to a worldview of Muslim brotherhood. In such an order, people living in various parts of the world must feel liberated from primordial affinities and worldly restrictions to feel the common bond of Islam, so that they could become what Iqbal calls a unified *Millat.* He tried to profess a new perspective on Islam which would be in consonance with modern philosophy and science, on the one hand, and afford a growing accommodation to the people due to its inherent dynamism and flexibility, on the other. Indeed, there appears some sort of discrepancy in the interpretation of Islam by Iqbal as at one point of time he argued for going back to the classical notion of Islam while at another, he argued for a modernised, dynamic and accommodative nature of Islam. However, his later conceptualisation of Islam was ostensibly aimed at convincing people of the viability of Islam as the world order which can accommodate people all across the world irrespective of their territorial and biological differentiations.

The advocacy of pan-Islamism by Iqbal was based on his understanding of the essential unity amongst Muslims breaking out of the barriers of this world. As he wrote,

> My real purpose is to look for a better social order and to present a universally acceptable ideal before the world, but it is impossible for me, in this effort, to outline this ideal, to ignore the social system and

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> values of Islam whose most important objective is to demolish all the artificial and pernicious distinctions of caste, creed, colour and economic status. Islam has opposed vehemently the idea of racial superiority which is the greatest obstacle in the way of international unity and cooperation; in fact, Islam and racial exclusiveness are utterly antithetical. (Iqbal 1973: 182)

Iqbal, thus, argued for pan-Islamism as the correct way to approach the problem of securing an accommodative and unifying social order in the world.

IDEAS ON PAKISTAN

Iqbal's propagation of the idea of creating a separate homeland for Muslims, later on named as Pakistan, may be traced to his anxiety in securing the ascendance of Muslims in the world in general and in India, in particular. In his various speeches and lectures, Iqbal had lamented the loss of prime position of the Muslims in the country and sought to create a sort of enlightenment amongst them, so that they could aspire to regain the glory and lost status in the Indian society. However, the run of British colonialism in India presumably presented an ambivalent perspective for Iqbal, as it presented the immediate target of seeking the independence of the country from the yoke of colonialism. Moreover, his initial infatuation with the personality of the Mother India inspired Iqbal to write in praise of the composite culture and the ethno-religious unity of the country. Thus, in his early life despite being a votary of Islamic resurgence, Iqbal did not argue for the division of the country probably in the hope that Muslims would be given their due share of participation in the affairs of the country after independence.

The turnaround in the views of Iqbal on the political unity of India came during his stay in Europe where his experiences in seeing concerted efforts being made to demolish the elements of Islamic religion and culture made him sceptical of the well-being of Muslims in plural societies, including India. Indeed, Iqbal was so shocked at the ongoing intellectual and imperialist misadventures in Europe that he found no other means than to raise the bogey of pan-Islamism to counter the impending threats to Islam in certain

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parts of the world. He was convinced of the need to have a common basis on which Muslims all over the world could be united in order to put up a brave front in the face of growing threat to Islamic culture and its followers. Hence, Iqbal adopted the twin strategy consisting of denouncing ideas like nationalism on the one hand, and advocating an alternative in the form of pan-Islamism, on the other. Iqbal's critique of western ideals such as secularism, unity in diversity and nationalism were attempts at negating the seemingly western value systems which foster divisions and cleavages in the society and try to keep people divided on those bases for longer durations. Iqbal noticed such tendencies on the part of the western countries as sinister designs to harm the interests of Muslims in various parts of the world.

Significantly, Iqbal did not call for the partition of the country as late as 1929, though he was aggressively pursuing the agenda of presenting Islam as a viable system of life which can accommodate people in various parts of the world on the basis of its innate humanitarian concerns. Moreover, in his lectures during this time, he presented a whole new perspective on Islam with a view to make a workable philosophy of life in modern times. He tried to establish the scientific nature of the precepts of Islam and called for its acceptance as a dynamic and flexible system which could adjust itself with the imperatives of the contemporary times (Iqbal 1930: 128). Thus, it seems that before putting forward his ideas on reorganisation of the country on religious and spatial grounds, Iqbal wanted to convince people of the viability of the Islamic order to be a successful alternative on which the various provinces of the country could be reorganised to create Muslim majority states.

Iqbal's first explicit reference to the reorganisation of India on religious basis came in the form of his presidential address delivered at Allahabad in April 1930 at the annual session of Muslim League. However, it is pertinent to note that in his quest for a separate homeland for Muslims, Iqbal's conceptualisation went only to the extent of seeking a reorganisation of the country, and not its partition, as it turned out to be the case in final analysis. He was quite harsh on the various statutory committees and commissions such as Nehru Committee and Simon Commission for denying Muslim their utmost right of having a separate homeland. He was particularly furious with the Nehru Committee report which had

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rejected his demand for the creation of the 'consolidated North-West Indian Moslem state' on the ground of difficulties in the running of such an unwieldy state. He was quite categorical on the point that there was no future for Muslims in a united India as it existed at that point of time. The basic argument of Iqbal, thus, in Allahabad was that in order to secure for the Muslims the propitious circumstances in which they could develop themselves to the fullest of their abilities, they needed to have an autonomous predominantly Muslim province within the boundaries of united India.

In Iqbal's scheme of the reorganisation of certain parts of the country, the epicentre of such reorganisation would have to be the north-western part of the country. As he laid down,

> [I] would like to see the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India. (Coupland 1945: 198)

Such a blueprint for the creation of a consolidated Muslim state in India appears to be the first concrete proposal advanced by the President of the Muslim League in the country despite demanding more and more autonomy and concentration of Muslims in certain parts of the country. The distinguishing point of this blueprint, however, appears to be its focus on securing a homeland for Muslims to manage their affairs within the geographical boundaries of India, and not separate from it.

Iqbal's proposal for the reorganisation of the political map of India, especially in the north-west region, did not amuse the leaders of various political parties, including the Muslim League, apart from people in general. His plea for the creation of a consolidated north-west India Muslim state within the federal setup of the country seemingly appeared less attractive to the different Muslim leaders, both from within and outside the Muslim League. Still, Iqbal stuck to his proposal in his speeches at the different Round Table Conferences and argued that the protection and promotion of the interests of Muslims could be possible only with the creation of a Muslim state as suggested by him. Later on, in his correspondences with Jinnah, Iqbal emphatically argued for his

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intellectual and political support in securing a consolidated Muslim state in the country, so that the mass of Muslim populations did not fall prey to the vagaries of the majoritarianism of Hindus. He even called upon Jinnah to repudiate the 'aesthetic socialism' of Jawaharlal Nehru which tried to perceive the Muslim problem of Indian from an economic perspective.[1] Thus, in his last days, though Iqbal was not able to forcefully work for the creation of a consolidated Muslim state in India, his consistent position that the protection and promotion of the interests of Muslims in India could be ensured only through the implementation of his proposal, he remained the ideological inspiration behind the subsequent move for the creation of Pakistan as a separate state in the Indian subcontinent.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Arguably, Iqbal stands as a unique, though acutely controversial personality of undivided India. His uniqueness presumably lies in his superb quality in articulating his views in such superlative terms that what he says appears to be the final word on the subject. Moreover, his ideological persuasions in first glorifying Mother India and later arguing for its indirect vivisection on a parochial basis, present a bewildering view in the minds of the people as to how to conceptualise and assess his contribution or activities in the national movements of both India and Pakistan. For instance, his description of India as *Sare Jahan se Achchha Hindustan Hamara* seemingly remains the unparalleled eulogy of the motherland by any poet in the country since time immemorial. Similarly, his articulation of the Muslim problem and its probable solution in the country remained, by and large, the fundamental formulation over which Pakistan was created in 1947 to provide a separate homeland to Muslims in the region.

The varying perceptions regarding the life and thinking of Iqbal seemingly emanate from the absolute comprehension of his ideas by the people on both sides of the border without looking at the context and the circumstances in which his intellectual explorations underwent drastic transformations. In other words, Iqbal happens to be a poet–philosopher whose ideas and formulations could be understood only by keeping in mind the particular contexts and

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circumstances in which such conceptualisations would have taken place. Therefore, if Iqbal's political philosophy is comprehended by people in absolute abstraction, he would remain an enigma for the people whether to call him a patriot or a communal thinker.

NOTE

1. Iqbal's letter to Jinnah written on 20 March 1937 (Chopra 1985: 67).

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9 M.N. Roy

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To examine the circumstances leading to the transformation of M.N. Roy from Marxism to Radical Humanism.
- To assess Roy's critique of Gandhian thought and action.
- To describe Roy's ideas on Radical Humanism.

Inspired by revolutionary terrorism, Manvendra Nath Roy (1887–1954)[1] was politically baptised when he was entrusted with the task of receiving a German steamer carrying arms for the revolutionary terrorists. This 1914 attempt to smuggle arms in ships failed and the plan for an armed insurrection against the British was aborted. He tried again to procure arms from China and that also did not succeed. Inducted into the revolutionary terrorist movement in Bengal, Roy appeared to have endorsed the 'terrorist' methods in the nationalist campaign for freedom. This was however short-lived. As he himself realised, these revolutionary organisations were crushed and prevented 'from constituting any serious danger because they relied more upon conspiracies than upon revolutionary social forces' (Roy 1971: 210). Roy escaped to America where he was introduced to socialist ideas and later on he participated in the formation of the Communist Party of Mexico. It was his involvement in the Communist Party of Mexico which gave him an opportunity to participate in the Second Congress of the Communist International. In 1927, he redefined Lenin's draft thesis on the national and colonial question that immediately made him a celebrity in the political circle. While elaborating his views on national and colonial question, he argued,

> [I]t will be necessary to examine which social class is the most revolutionary in the respective country so as to make the contact with this social class and in this manner to rally the entire people and to support it in its struggle against Imperialism. If we do not consider the problem from this viewpoint, we will make no headway at all.… The only way to fulfill the great task of [revolution] is through the organisation of the exploited classes to become the revolutionary

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parties of the people. ('On the National and Colonial Question', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 305–06)

FROM MARXISM TO RADICAL HUMANISM

As a representative of the Communist International, he led a delegation to China in 1926. Soon he fell out with the Communist International leadership and was expelled from the Commintern in 1929. Roy returned to India in 1930 with the sole goal of participating in the nationalist struggle. During the 1930–40 period, he was involved in the nationalist movement. The honeymoon was over by 1940 when Roy founded his own party known as the Radical Democratic Party seeking to provide a combined platform involving peasants, workers and petty bourgeoisie. By 1948, he dismantled his party and founded a new movement for a Radical or New Humanism.

As evident from this small biographical account, Roy's political journey—from revolutionary terrorism to Radical Humanism—allowed him to conceptualise radicalism in different perspectives. His critical alternative to Lenin's draft thesis on nationalism and colonialism is based on his attempt to understand Marxism in the context of colonialism. Opposed to the ideology of the Indian National Congress (INC), he suggested that the future of Indian liberation movement depended on the participation of the neglected sections of society. While commenting on the new basis of the national struggle, Roy thus exhorted, 'the future of Indian politics (of national liberation) will ... be determined by the social forces which still remain and will always remain antagonistic to Imperialism even in the new era dominated by the "higher ideals of Swaraj within the Empire"'('The Future of Indian Politics', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 513[Chapter 12]).

He was convinced, as his draft thesis on national and colonial question demonstrates, that 'the mass movements in the colonies are growing independently of the nationalist movements [and] the masses distrust the political leaders who always lead them astray and prevent them from revolutionary action' ('Original Draft of Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question', reproduced in Ray 2000a: 167). While pursuing this argument further, he also underlined the growing importance of the proletariat in political movements against imperialism. Critical

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of 'the bourgeois national democrats in the colonies' (Ray 2000a: 167), Roy was in favour of supporting the:

> ... revolutionary mass action through the medium of a communist party of the proletarians [that] will bring the real revolutionary forces to action which will not only overthrow the foreign imperialism but lead progressively to the development of Soviet power, thus preventing the rise of native capitalism in place of the vanquished foreign capitalism, to further oppress the people. ('Original Draft of Supplementary Theses on the National and Colonial Question', reproduced in ibid.: 168)

CRITIQUE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT AND ACTION

This overall assessment of the national and colonial question appears to have provided the basic theoretical framework to Roy in assessing Gandhi and his political ideology. M.N. Roy provided perhaps the best and well-argued Marxist critique of Gandhi's social and political ideas. What was evident in the Congress in the 1920s, especially following the appearance of the Mahatma, was clearly articulated by Roy while commenting on socio-economic circumstances of India under colonialism. In articulating his views, Roy stands apart because of his attempt in conceptualising nationalism from the Marxist point of view. Apart from his ideological conviction, the larger colonial context seemed to have obviously cast significant influences on Roy's radicalism that sought to redefine the ideological goal of the national bourgeoisie in India. So, Roy was significantly different from other radicals because of his attempted mix of nationalism with what he drew from Marxism. This also gave a peculiar theoretical twist to Roy's conceptualisation of radicalism underlining the impact of both nationalist and Marxist ideas. In other words, this conceptualisation, drawn on nationalism and Marxism, brings out its innovative nature identifying 'both the astonishing daring of Roy's radicalism, and a tragic heteronomy within its historical consciousness' (Kaviraj 1986: 213). Gandhism was, according to him, the most important of all the ideologies of class collaborations within the nationalist movement. Since it

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'will fall victim to its own contradictions' (Roy 1971: Chapter VIII, reproduced in Ray 2000a: 346), the Indian national movement, actuated by the spirit of non-violence was bound to fail. The inability of the Mahatma to comprehend the changing nature of social and political forces opposed to the prevalent nationalist movement remained at the root of its failure. Sharing Gandhi's criticism of capitalist civilisation, Roy was, however, critical of the alternative that Gandhi provided simply because it was neither 'realistic' nor 'practicable'. He further argued that 'one need not be a sentimental humanitarian nor a religious fanatic in order to denounce the present order of society in the countries where capitalism rules' (Roy 1971: 348–49). Capitalism was unavoidable and 'will not collapse because sentimental humanitarians find it full of cruelty and injustice, [but because] of its own contradictions' (Ray 2000a: 348–49). Illustrative of 'the satanic western civilisation' (Roy 1971: 369), the British rule in India provided the most obvious missing link in India's growth as a national economy. Gandhi's role was significant in conceptualising the adverse economic impact on India of capitalism that was feverishly introduced into India in the form of large capitalist industries at the cost of handicrafts and other indigenous efforts. Not only did he articulate the devastating nature of western capitalism, he also radically altered the nature of the anti-British political campaign of the moderate and extremist varieties. While analysing the success of Gandhi in mobilising people in the 1919 anti-Rowlatt *satyagraha*, Roy mentioned,

> ...by inaugurating the campaign of *satyagraha* (passive resistance to evil), an active vent was given to the Opposition, which could thus transcend the limits of mere indignation meetings and passing resolutions of protest. Devoid of any other weapons to fight the British government, the Indian people were provided with a way of making their energy felt by the opponent. Gandhi postulated that the Indian people would 'refuse to obey these law and such other laws', but at the same time 'faithfully follow the truth and refrain from violence to life, person and property'.... For the first time in its history, the Indian national movement entered into the period of active struggle, and in doing so it had to call upon the masses of the people. (Roy 1971: Chapter VIII, reproduced in Ray 2000a: 369–70)

So, Gandhi was a clear departure from the past. Despite the limited goal of *satyagraha* due to its inherent weaknesses, it had

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'penetrated the villages, it had rudely shaken the resignation of the masses of Indian people' (Roy 1971: 368). There was no doubt that Gandhi contributed to the articulation of this mass movement which Roy characterised as 'a huge popular upheaval', caused essentially by 'economic exploitation not alone by imperial capital, but by native agencies as well' (ibid.). Roy, therefore, concluded that 'the imminent popular upheaval', inspired by Gandhi and organised on the principles he devised, was 'a social outburst, the rise of a socially revolutionary force uncompromising, unrelenting, implacable, which would mark the commencement of the inevitable class war' (Roy 1971: Chapter VIII, reproduced in Ray 2000a: 368). As evident, Roy was critical of the ideology of non-violence and *satyagraha* for being politically restrictive; and yet, he found in Gandhi the most effective political leadership that extended the constituencies of nationalist politics by involving peripheral sections of the society.

For him, non-violence was a cloak:

> ... to serve the interests of those who have built castles of social privilege and economic exploitation. If the end of nationalism is to glorify the privileged few, then non-violence is certainly useful; but to nationalism of a broader kind, which is the expression of the desire of the entire Indian people, it is a positive hindrance. ('The Cult of Non Violence: Its Socio-economic Background', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 156)

The cult of non-violence was a convenient tool for both Gandhi-led nationalist political forces as well those supporting imperialism. Hence, Roy predicted that both these forces 'will bury their hatchet [in due course] in order to carry on the crusade against those forces of revolution which menace the security of vested interests'(ibid.). The idea of non-cooperation that drew on non-violence was just a cloak to pursue the narrow vested interests at the cost of the majority. Quoting an editorial in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Roy argued that Gandhi did not invent the strategy of non-cooperation. What he did was simply 'to find an organised and outer expression to the latent discontent in the country. Gandhi saw the danger of this latent discontent. He did not want that this discontent should be left to itself and burst out in fatal physical revolt or

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revolution.… This was the true inwardness of his campaign' ('The Cult of Non Violence: Its Socio-economic Background', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 154). It was clear to Roy that non-violence was tuned to protect the vested interests and non-cooperation was the best strategy to contain the revolutionary fervour of the masses. In other words, this strategy was ideologically governed and dictated in order to 'thwart the development of dynamic revolutionary forces which threaten to push Indian nationalism dangerously farther than the so-called politically minded middle class desired it to go' (ibid.). By drawing attention to the sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement, Roy sought to prove the point. According to him, Gandhi called off the movement because he apprehended a revolutionary outburst challenging the ideological basis of the Non-Cooperation Movement. In his words, 'with one single breath, the Mahatma thus blows up the beautiful castle built so laboriously during all these years of storm and stress' ('The Release of Gandhi', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 182–83). Not only did he stall a revolutionary upsurge, he also became an instrument at the hands of the colonial power to contain movements threatening its very foundation. As Roy put it, Gandhi was immediately released as soon as the movement was withdrawn simply because the government understood that 'he will be a very valuable asset in the coming game of "change of heart"' (ibid.: 182). Furthermore, in releasing Gandhi, the government was not generous but calculative because 'none will appreciate this act of generosity more than the Mahatmaji who will pay it back [in some form or another] when required' (ibid.: 183).

Critical of Gandhi's *swaraj* that was doomed to fail because 'the time is gone when the people could be inspired by a vague promise of *swaraj*' ('The Cult of Non Violence: Its Socio-economic Background', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 156), Roy further outlined the programme of a revolutionary nationalist party in the following ways:

1. Nationalist independence: complete break from the empire; a democratic republic based on universal suffrage.
2. Abolition of feudalism and landlordism.
3. Nationalisation of land; none but the cultivator will have the right of landholding.

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4. Modernisation of agriculture by state aid.
5. Nationalisation of mines and public utilities.
6. Development of modern industries.
7. Protection of workers, minimum wages, eight-hour day, abolition of child labour, insurance and other advanced social legislation.
8. Free and compulsory primary education.
9. Freedom of religion and worship.
10. Rights of minorities.

As the programme suggests, Roy provided a critical alternative to the Congress-led nationalist movement that was more 'reconciliatory' and less 'revolutionary'. These programmes are mere reiteration of what he wrote in his *India in Transition* in 1922 while outlining the meaning of *swaraj*. In the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Congress, as Roy believed, appeared to have lost its revolutionary potentials because of two reasons: (*a*) the Congress lacked a revolutionary leadership, and (*b*) it had lost support of the masses. While suggesting the means to strengthen the Congress, Roy recommended that in order to regain its strength, 'the Congress should go to trade unions and the peasant *Sabha*s (meetings), listen to the grievances discussed there and incorporate them into a truly constructive programme which will draw the wide masses once more within the folds of the Congress party to fight under its command for *Swaraj*' (Roy 1922: 3, reproduced in Ray 2000a: 541). Critical of Gandhian *swaraj* as it evolved in the aftermath of the 1919–21 Non-Cooperation Movement, Roy was convinced that this Congress-led movement was bound to fail since it aimed at protecting exploiting classes ignoring 'the political rights of the workers and peasants' ('Appeal to the Nationalists', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 324). As a Marxist, he also felt the need to join hands with the proletariats elsewhere otherwise these movements would remain just ripples. He, therefore, suggested that 'the revolutionary nationalists should, therefore, not only join hands with the Indian workers and peasants, but should establish close relations with the advanced proletariat of the world' (ibid.). By attributing the abject poverty in India to the British policy of 'forcibly making India an agricultural adjunct to industrial Britain' ('India's Problem and its Solution', reproduced in Ray 2000a: 555),

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Roy was, for obvious reason, critical of the dominion status within the empire. Hence, he argued that:

> ... neither self-government realised progressively by Non Cooperation will change the economic condition of the toiling [masses].… Therefore, the interests of the majority demand *complete separation from all imperial connection and the establishment of a Republican State* based on the democratic principles of *Universal Suffrage*. ('Definition of Swaraj', reproduced in Ray 2000b: 101, emphasis in the original)

Roy made a thorough analysis of Gandhi's constructive programme which, he felt, was absolutely inadequate for India's 'economic salvation'. The constructive programme was announced by the Congress Working Committee on 12 February 1922 at Bardoli immediately after the events at Chauri Chaura where violence broke out in wake of the Non-Cooperation Movement. Gandhi had a significant role in articulating the constructive programme since the Bardoli resolution vested in him the full powers of the All India Congress Committee. In order to ensure the economic well-being of the masses, the constructive programme included (*a*) *charkha*, (*b*) *khaddar*, (*c*) removal of untouchability, and (*d*) fight against drinking alcohol. While the first two programmes were essentially economic in nature, the rest were social problems with economic implications. There was no doubt that the campaign against the removal of untouchability and drinking alcohol made people aware of the adverse implications of these social evils. But the *charkha–khaddar* programme was, as M.N. Roy was convinced, doomed to be a failure for its obvious adverse economic consequences on the consumers. Two basic requirements for its success were (*a*) *charkha* must be introduced into every house and (*b*) *khaddar* must be worn by all. These conditions could never be met since *charkha* was not as popular as was conceived and the price of *khaddar* was higher than that of the mill-made cloth. Given the cost of *khaddar* that was beyond the capacity of Indian workers and peasants, this campaign was bound to fail. Taking into account the average income of the Indian workers and peasants, argued Roy, *khaddar* could never become an attractive proposition in the nationalist campaign. Their paltry income never got them 'the minimum quantity of clothing' they needed; they also 'cannot be expected to go naked rather than wearing "the unholy" foreign stuff' ('India's Problem and its Solution', reproduced in Ray 2000a: 553–54).

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Roy also reminded Gandhi that the forcible application of home-spun during the *swadeshi* movement was responsible for the decline of this movement. 'Sentiment can keep a movement going for a certain length of time', Roy further underlined, 'but it cannot last forever unless fed with more substantial factors' ('India's problem and its Solution', reproduced in Ray 2000a: 553–54). Similarly, Gandhi's insistence on *charkha* was based on a hollow economic logic. In other words, not economically viable, the fate of *charkha* was equally sealed. As he explained, since its high price was daily restricting the sale of *khaddar* and also the market for home-spun yarn, its manufacture thus gradually became economically unviable. So, the future of *charkha* was uncertain since *khaddar* never became an automatic choice for the masses due to its inherent limitations. Unless *charkha–khaddar* was made economically viable, 'propaganda for the revival of cottage industry does not prepare the people for a purely political movement' (ibid.: 554).

The other two items, namely, removal of untouchability and campaign against drinking alcohol, might have propaganda value, but were hardly effective, as Roy underlined, for two reasons: first, given the historically well-entrenched prejudices against those identified as untouchables, 'no amount of ethical propagandising' would strike at the foundation of such an age-old practice (ibid.: 554). What was required was a constant campaign, coupled with changes in the mode and relations of productions redefining interpersonal relationships by challenging 'the prejudices' as harmful for India's evolution as 'a healthy polity' (ibid.). Likewise, it was difficult, if not impossible, to counter effectively, simply by sermon, the drinking habit that provided the poor with a handy device 'to drown their sorrows in unconsciousness' (ibid.).

Roy's analysis of Gandhi's constructive programmes clearly suggests that they were basically verbal, couched in sentiments, rather than effective programmes involving the masses. In view of the serious weaknesses, these programmes failed to achieve the goal that the Mahatma so assiduously set for the masses. According to Roy, these programmes 'should be such as to appeal to the immediate interests of the masses of the people' (ibid.: 555). For him, the non-payment of taxes that already had galvanised the peasants in UP, Bengal and Punjab into action should be pursued with zeal. Advising the Congress to adopt the agenda of the masses, Roy recommended that 'the preparatory work consists of demonstrating

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practically and not by sentimental humanitarian cant, that the Congress is the leader of the worker and peasant population. [Only then] Civil Disobedience can be inaugurated with all the possibilities of a revolutionary development' ('India's Problem and its Solution', reproduced in Ray 2000a: 555). As demonstrated, Roy carved a space for himself by providing a critique of Gandhi's social and economic ideas. Despite his admiration for Gandhi who infused a new zeal to India's struggle for independence, Roy was perhaps one of those few, who were never swayed by the charisma of the Mahatma when it involved social, economic and political issues affecting the masses. Hence, his critique remains a significant intervention underlining both the weaknesses and the natural strength of the ideology that the Mahatma sought to articulate as an activist–theoretician.

What is clear in M.N. Roy's thought is an attempt to conceptualise his response drawing upon Marxism and his specific experiences in the context of Indian nationalist movement. Gandhi was a constant referent for obvious reason. In fact, political radicalism acquired a completely different connotation with the growing participation of the so-called peripheral sections of the society. As shown, it was during the Non-Cooperation Movement, the constituencies of the INC went beyond cities and educated middle class. M.N. Roy seemed to have captured this moment of colonialism in India and provided a theoretical framework that largely drew on Marxism. In other words, by seeking to capture 'neglected voice' of the people, Roy performed a historical task along with those radicals striving to involve the subaltern in the nationalist movement. Whether his radicalism was politically viable in that particular context is debatable, though there is no doubt that his ideas were ideologically refreshing simply because it took into account the growing revolutionary ferment among the masses. Like his radical counterparts in the nationalist movement, Roy put forward a well-argued theoretical model that explained the predicament of the Gandhi-led nationalist leadership due to its failure to comprehend the mass fervour confronting both the colonial power and also the indigenous vested interests. Yet, Roy's analysis of Gandhi from a strictly Marxist point of view, though creative, failed to understand 'the cultural power of Gandhi', and its ability to fashion weapons of political struggle out of unorthodox material. This led him to

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misconstrue what, in retrospect, was the strength of Gandhi's politics as 'an impotent mysticism'.[2]

RADICAL HUMANISM

As the ultimate theoretical construct of M.N. Roy, the philosophy of Radical Humanism or New Humanism represents the zenith of an intellectually bewildering journey spanning over a period of over 30 years. It appears to be rather unfortunate for an intellectually sound and fertile mind that Roy was to have meandered into so many diverse directions that no systematic, consistent, pragmatic and acceptable theory could be evolved having obvious followings amongst the Indian masses. The genesis of the concept of New Humanism lies in the frustration of Roy with the subtle characteristics of the Marxian philosophy like its feeble ethical moorings and overemphasis on the economic interpretation of the history to the substantive, if not total, disregard to the value of the intellect in the dynamics of the historical processes. Thus, initially Roy tried to evolve a radical perspective on humanism which still had a lot to owe to Marxism. However, dissatisfied even with his radical incarnation, Roy made the final move of propounding a theory rooted in integral scientific humanism which he called as the 'New Humanism, new, because it is Humanism enriched, reinforced and elaborated by scientific knowledge and social experience gained during the centuries of modern civilisation' (Roy 1947: 42).

The core of the Radical Humanism of Roy lies in laying greatest emphasis on the personality of the individual as a human being. He was very critical of all those theories and perspectives which did not take individual as the focal point of analysis. For instance, his opposition to Marxism stemmed from, among other things, its undue stress on the phenomenon of class struggle under which the human being lost his individuality in order to become a part of one class or the other. At the same time, he denounced the framework of nationalism also apparently due to the fact that it also subsumes the personality of the human being within meta constructions of the nation and nationhood. He was categorical in propounding that 'Radicalism thinks in terms neither of nation

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nor class; its concern is man; it conceives freedom as freedom of the individual' (Roy 1947: 36).

The philosophy of New Humanism, in fact, clamours to act as the liberator of man from the advertent or inadvertent fetters which were put on him by various theoretical constructs over a period of time in history. Espousing the radicalism in the innate qualities of man, New Humanism discounts any claim that man draws his self or independent status from any super-physical being. Rather, it reiterates the fundamental doctrine of Radical Humanism that human beings derive all their virtues and prowess from their creative attainments in unravelling the mysteries and partial conquest of nature. Roy, therefore, argues that if man stretches out his abilities and ingenuities to move out of the circumference of nature, how can he be subordinated to something which itself is very artificial and man-made enough to be undone time and again. Hence, what remains permanent is the solid personality of man consisting of physiological units on the one hand and rational intellectual faculties on the other.

The human being, as the central agent of the New Humanism of M.N. Roy, is supposed to be characterised by three fundamental elements of reason, morality and freedom. Given the diversity in the nature and characteristics of the vast majority of people, Roy takes rationality as the unifying element in every human being echoing the notion of harmony in the universe. Taking every man as essentially rational, Roy convincingly argues that the behaviour of every person in the world is rational, though it may appear to be irrational at times owing to the differences in the underlying patterns of life in various parts of the world. The innate rationality in the personality of every human being dovetails on him the capability of discovering and rediscovering the laws of nature in order to unfetter him from the hidden bondages which happen to be imposed on him for the time being.

Morality constitutes another significant trait of man as conceptualised by M.N. Roy. However, Roy is quick enough to discard the notion that morality is based on intuitional and transcendental pillars. Applying the canons of Marxian training, Roy argues that morality stems out of the scientific application of human rationality to the dynamics of social relations and mutual adjustments of people with one another. Given the innate unifying and creative

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value of morality in society, Roy asserts that it aims at translating into reality the collective and common good of the whole society.

Freedom, to Roy, epitomises the crux of the biological struggle for self-protection and multiplication of the human beings in a somewhat hostile nature. In other words, the human being's quest for finding out the laws of nature and the dynamics of the functioning of the cosmos has the ultimate objective of providing certain clues to him to enable him to get rid of the restrictions imposed by nature. The product of this enterprise is freedom for man. Therefore, the notion of freedom, argues Roy, consists of the inalienable elements of humanism, individualism and rationalism (Roy 1945: 61). The application of rationality by the individual in his search for knowledge culminates, in the final analysis, in the idea of humanism.

The cumulative impact of the elements of reason, morality and freedom on human beings has been to provide a cosmopolitan perspective to the theory of New Humanism. As Roy (1955: 310) succinctly points out, 'New Humanism is cosmopolitan. A cosmopolitan commonwealth of spiritually free men will not be limited by the boundaries of national states—capitalist, fascist, socialist, communist, or of any other kind—which will gradually disappear under the impact of the twentieth century renaissance of Man.' The cosmopolitanism of New Humanism goes beyond the notion of internationalism, as the latter is based on the assumption of the fledging existence of various nation–states in the world. However, New Humanism presupposes the antagonism between the vibrancy of nation–states and the concept of cosmopolitanism. The realisation of the dream of cosmopolitanism, therefore, becomes conditional to the fact that nation–states are neutralised, if not decimated, as the formidable actors in the world (Roy 1947: 50).

Elaborating the economic dimensions of New Humanism, Roy pleads for economic reorganisation of the society free from exploitation of one man by another, leading to the establishment of cooperative economy. For this, he pinned his hopes on planned economic development with the virtues of cooperation and decentralisation underpinning the system. Thus, the communal pattern of social growth, as envisaged by Roy, would have yielded the maximum individual freedom to all men in the society. However, Roy was prudent enough to factor the role of state in the economic activities of men and considered it as some sort of necessary evil.

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In fact, the conduct of economic activities in the society in a communal manner was disturbed by the origin of private property. The obvious probability of the ensuing disagreements amongst the individuals necessitated the creation of some sort of regulatory mechanism to maintain a minimum order in the conduct of the economic activities of the people. Thus, Roy maintains that the advent of the mechanism of state is neither due to a social contract nor superimposed on the society. On the contrary, it happens to be a historical and natural phenomenon arising out in the context of the need for a common instrument to ensure the security and order for all in the society. Over the years, the concentration of power in the hands of the state is taken by Roy as a perversion of the role designed for the qualified administrators who arrogate to themselves maximum powers to lord over the people. Opposing it vehemently, Roy seeks to reorganise the structure and functions of the state based on the doctrines of democracy, decentralisation and pluralism. Like the classical liberals, Roy also argues for minimal interference of the state in the activities of the people and the emergence of a number of other equally important and autonomous social institutions who would act in tandem with the state to ensure a free and contended life for the people.

The notion of 'organised democracy' (Roy 1947: 12) is to be the hallmark of the political dimension of the New Humanism of M.N. Roy. Being a democrat to the hilt, Roy, nevertheless, despised the classical parliamentary form of democracy as prevalent in the West. To him, democratic political setup must be the facilitator of a participative citizenry in the country, which the liberal parliamentary democracy seemed to have failed miserably. At the same time, Roy also denounced the communist democratic systems characterised by the notion of democratic centralism and asked for dismantling of the same. His conception of organised democracy, therefore, was expected to serve the very people who would lie at the root of the democratic system of the country as it would not be structured in the top-heavy model where the higher-ups would wield the stick over the lower rung of leadership. On the other hand, the functional vibrancy to the system would be provided by the local people's committees lying at the root of the democratic system as they would remain the source of power for the higher levels of the democratic institutions.

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New Humanism believes in the value of humanist politics also, which means, in simple terms, politics not for power but for the purification and rationalisation of the political life of the people. Roy was fully convinced of the debasing property of the politics being practiced during his time through the medium of political parties. He maintained that party-based political activities in the country are aimed at getting the most out of the people for serving the interests of a privileged few in the society at the cost of the masses. Thus, politics has become a corrupting instrument whereby people enter the arena of politics to make quick riches for themselves. To get rid of this malaise in the Indian political system, he, therefore, advocated the abolition of political parties and the conduct of the political activities in the country not on the basis of parties but individual perspectives on the issues of the common man which would lead to the spread of humanist politics in the society.

The social fabric of New Humanism is designed by M.N. Roy out of his subtle conclusion that class struggle could not be the only reality in a society (Roy 1947: 26). Rather, Roy noted that no society could sustain itself without some sort of cohesiveness existing amongst the people. At the same time, Roy also discarded the classical Marxian formulation of the existence of only two classes—haves and have-nots—in the society. In order to provide for an educated, rational and mobile class which could have acted as the buffer between the two seemingly antagonistic classes, Roy accorded a prized status to the middle class in his social perspective of New Humanism. Even despite eulogising the role of the middle class as the moderator of the social cohesion in society, Roy was emphatic to give the primacy to the individual rather than the class in the social formation of New Humanism.

Finally, the medium of fructifying the ideal of New Humanism, to Roy, would not be anything else than education. Implying the broadest possible connotation of the term education, Roy was of the opinion that it was futile to talk about revolution being brought about through the means of class struggle or violent means. To him, education could be the slow but sure emancipator of the people from the shackles of the anachronistic and irrational system of life. Hence, Roy pleads for the denunciation of the idea of violent and quick revolution to defend the virtues of rationality, morality and freedom amongst the people, creating the background for

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the ushering in of a new era of evolved revolutionary life. The enlightenment going deep into the minds and heart of the masses through the methodology of education would be far more indelible and everlasting than ideological intoxication in a short span of time. Education would be able to bare the truth in the face of people and give them a perspective on how to respond to a particular situation in a rational manner. Thus, Roy stresses that the whole scheme of New Humanism would be operationalised only when the masses are adequately educated in rational thinking, so that they are able to look for plausible revolutionary solutions to the problems plaguing the society.

A critical evaluation of the philosophy of New Humanism of M.N. Roy reveals certain discrepancies in the entire scheme of things. To begin with, the idea of New Humanism was advanced by Roy in the face of his utter dissatisfaction with the theoretical constructs of the ideology of Marxism over the years. Indeed, most of the characteristics of New Humanism are in the nature of discarding the prevalent conception of the Marxian analysis and evolving a counter argument rooted in reason, morality and freedom of the individual. What, however, is incongruent in this regard, is that Roy could not resist the temptations and trappings of his longstanding training and association with the ideology of Marxism, as a result of which he could not completely free himself from the allurements of the Marxism which he still found to have 'the positive outcome or early intellectual efforts to evolve a philosophy which could harmonise the processes of physical nature, social evolution and the will and emotions of the individual man' (Roy 1944: vii). A concrete reflection of his clinging to the basic postulates of Marxism is his idea of New Humanist Revolution which, despite remaining almost antithetical to the classical Marxian notion of revolution, remains articulated in terms of 'revolution' in the typical Marxian tone.

Another crucial aspect on which the philosophy of M.N. Roy is found amiss has been its feasibility analysis in the face of prevailing socio-economic and political circumstances in the country. For instance, as part of delineating the political framework of the theory of New Humanism, Roy calls for the abolition of political parties and the conduct of political activities in the country in such a way so as to evolve a model of humanist politics. Such assertions,

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despite being intellectually congruent and morally high sounding, fall flat in face of their practical value for the country. For instance, it has not been illustrated through concrete examples by Roy as to how a modern democratic system of government could be run without the existence of political parties as the primary instrument to articulate the varying opinion of the people in the society, which, in final analysis, becomes the basis of policies and programmes of various parties.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

As the discussion suggests, there are two distinct phases in the evolution of M.N. Roy's political ideas: first, instead of blindly following Marxism while seeking to grasp colonialism and nationalism in India, Roy reinterpreted Marxism in a creative manner. By suggesting that the nationalist forces needed to be strengthened in colonies, he provided the most critical inputs to the Marxists who failed to grasp the historical importance of the 'indigenous bourgeoisie' in a particular historical context. This was undoubtedly an innovative idea which was useful in organising the masses against colonialism, especially when the communist parties remained politically peripheral. Similarly, New Humanism of M.N. Roy appears to be a fresh perspective on the system of life prevalent in India during the times of the national movement. Apparently, the most astounding feature of New Humanism seems to be the reassertion of certain values as basic to the realisation of a good life for the people. Hence, rooted in the individualism of human beings, the philosophy of New Humanism rests on the eternal values of reason, morality and freedom, which have been stressed to be the underlying characteristics of the life of the people in modern times. Presenting the theory of New Humanism as a comprehensive and somewhat all-inclusive theoretical construct, Roy seeks to advocate a model of life having a distinct imprint on all the aspects of human life. Thus, in the political field, he calls for the setting up of an organised democracy which would be a partyless polity where the run of politics would be inherently humanistic. Economically, New Humanism seeks to provide for a cooperative economy where production would be carried out with the sole

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purpose of serving human needs under communal ownership of the means of production. Similarly, the social order under New Humanism would be marked by the prevalence of a deep social cohesion amongst the people as against the notion of class struggle, which has been found to permeate the society under Marxian scheme of things. Yet, what seems to be lying as the bedrock of the philosophy of New Humanism is the notion of education which, to Roy, would act as the liberator and emancipator of human beings leading to the onset of a New Humanist Revolution in the final run. Thus, despite the comprehensiveness and refreshing perspective of the theory of New Humanism, what is tragic on the part of it is that it has found very few takers in India. And it appears that the same tragedy visits almost all aspects of the intellectual enterprises initiated by M.N. Roy all through his life.

NOTES

1. In contrast with other communist leaders, M.N. Roy appears to have received adequate scholarly attention. One of the most detailed account of Roy's political ideology is Haithcox (1971); for a general study of the growth of the communist movement in India, see Overstreet and Windmiller (1960).
2. Sudipta Kaviraj (1986: 229) thus argues, 'Gandhi's politics were not wholly mystical; rather, even its mysticism was often deliberate, its irrationalities carefully thought-out.'

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10 Ram Manohar Lohia

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore the main currents of Lohia's political thought.
- To elucidate the basic components of Lohia's social thought.
- To understand Lohia as an internationalist.

Dr Ram Manohar Lohia (1910–67) may arguably be reckoned as the most unconventional and, may be original as well, theoretician amongst the Indian socialists given his penchant for 'New Socialism'. Called a 'doctrinal socialist' (Appadorai 2002: 311), indeed, it appeared to be his passion to liberate the theory of socialism from the shackles of theory and practice of Marxism and International Communism. Interestingly, Lohia sought to provide a new and unique dimension to socialism by attuning it to the needs and aspirations of the developing countries like India by incorporating within it certain elements of even capitalism which, he averred, has facilitated a subtle improvement in the standard of lives of the working class and its conversion into the middle class in Europe (Lohia 1963: 6). In other words, the creditable contribution of Lohia to the body of socialist thought[1] in India seems to be improvising the notion by ingraining in it numerous related intellectual precepts with the purpose of ensuring its cent percent suitability to the imperatives of the Indian circumstances. What, however, remained intact in such a conceptualisation of socialism is its unflinching focus on the creation of an equal, democratic and egalitarian socio-economic and political system aimed at securing the all-round development of people in India.

Like many other Indian thinkers, the thought process of Lohia was also shaped by an activist life lived by him. Being a prominent leader of the socialist movement in both pre- and post-independence times, his theoretical explorations in various issues confronting India were enriched by the empirical input drawn from various movements he led or participated in. For instance, presumably it was Lohia's early and subsequent consistent exposure to Gandhian ideas and movements that led him to think of Indianising the notion of socialism by giving an overdose of

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decentralisation, and also addressing the issues plaguing India, such as managing the vast socio-economic and politico-cultural diversities of the country. At the same time, his sharp analytical faculties coming from his brilliant academic training on the one hand, and his erudition, on the other, helped him in grasping the theoretical formulations in vogue in various parts of the world and exploring the possibility of adapting them, given their suitability in resolving the complexities of India. An attempt, therefore, is made in this chapter to give an exposition of the main currents of the social and political thought of Lohia.

A LIFE IN INDIGENOUS EVOLUTION

An analysis of the life and times of Lohia unmistakably leads one to conclude that despite being exposed to various environs and ideas, his fundamental framework of perceiving things remained centred around the perspectives totally Indian in nature. In other words, instead of arguing for the need for India to adapt herself to certain alien values or institutional framework ostensibly for the infallibility of such ideas or institutions, Lohia appeared bent upon evolving indigenous models for the needs of the country. For instance, his 'Chaukhamba Model' of decentralisation seems a *sui generis* idea for a country having preponderance of village as the basic unit of life for an majority of the people. Moreover, in cases where he subscribed to an idea foreign to India, such as socialism, he infused excessive doses of interpolation and extrapolation in it, landing up constructing apparently a new incarnation of the concept.

Born in a village in Faizabad district of UP on 23 March 1910, Lohia was one of the few nationalist leaders in the country having his roots in rural India which probably conditioned his thinking process to a great extent in that he remained engrossed with such perspectives throughout his life.[2] The nationalist and teaching background of his father seemed to have ingrained two quite significant traits in his personality. First, he was introduced to the niceties of the Indian national movement from a very early age. Second, he apparently was inspired to develop an undiminishing urge for academic pursuits which culminated in his earning

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his doctoral degree from Berlin University in 1932 on the subject of 'Salt and Satyagraha'.

Lohia's early initiation in the national movement was marked by two remarkable features. One, his going to a meeting with Mahatma Gandhi along with his father and listening to his views on issues like *satyagraha*, non-violence and struggle for the independence of the country so much influenced the tender mind of Lohia that he became a Gandhian and remained so throughout his life. Even in his later ideological explorations, the main tenets of Gandhism remained prominent in his thought and actions. Two, imbued with the love for his motherland, he became a freedom fighter at an early age when he organised a small mourning shut-down on the death of Tilak in 1920. His participation in the national movement since then continued unabated, a highpoint of which was the student protest that he organised in 1928 to protest against the Simon Commission.

In 1929, Lohia left for Berlin to pursue his higher studies and remained there till his return to India in 1934. His sojourn abroad seemingly developed in him a deep interest in India's relations with the rest of the world. Moreover, his participation in the proceedings of the League of Nations apparently sowed the seeds of internationalism in him which later developed in his propagating the idea of world government and international peace. On his return to India, though Lohia joined the Indian National Congress (INC), his exposure to the socialist ideas in Europe as well as his own study of the socio-economic problems of India probably shaped his inclination towards socialism, despite being an ardent Gandhian. Consequently, he helped set up the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. He also, along with Nehru, organised the foreign affairs department of the Congress and became its first secretary. During the Second World War, his anti-British activities landed him up in jail. In the course of the Quit India Movement, when most of the prominent leaders were imprisoned, Lohia became one of the foremost leaders of the movement and broadcast regularly on the Congress radio to disseminate the news of the movement (Chandra et al. 1989: 464). A remarkable though seemingly incidental event of this time was his struggle for the freedom and civil liberty of the people of Goa in 1946. The subsequent phase of the national movement saw Lohia's participation in full measure. During this time, he also showed his

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solidarity with Gandhi in his peace missions to communally tensed areas and advocated the peace and unity of the country.

In the post-independence times, Lohia's growing differences with the Congress leadership led to his quitting the party and eventually setting up the Praja Socialist Party in 1952. Elected as a member of the Lok Sabha in 1963 for the first time, Lohia put his extraordinary oratorical skill to best use on the floor of the House to articulate his informed views on the causes and solution to the problem of poverty in India. Finally, the life of an intellectually versatile and practically tireless crusader for the cause of both national as well as international peace and well-being came to an end on 12 October 1967. Over a period of time, Lohia authored a number of books and monographs to propound his ideas and theories, the significant ones of which happen to be *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism* and *Will to Power and Other Writings*. Thus, though he left behind a rich and impeccable legacy consisting of a vast range of diversity in its intellectual framework and wide ranging domain in its functional sphere, the life and thought of Lohia remains pitifully at the periphery in the eyes of the biographers and chroniclers of the Indian political thought.[3]

MAIN CURRENTS OF LOHIA'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

Owing to the varying contexts and vast exposures in a life of just 57 years, the range of the social and political thoughts of Lohia is amazingly enormous. What is, however, more astounding is the topical spectrum of his thought which bears testimony to the exceptional lived experiences Lohia was blessed with, thanks to his quest for knowledge and untiring participation in the social and political issues facing the country at various points of time. For example, on the one hand, his insightful analysis of the problems such as poverty and systems of government, and innovative solutions like ideas of *sapta kranti*[4] and 'Chaukhamba Model'[5] of government illustrates his deep understanding of the grass roots issues of the country. On the other hand, his perspectives and conceptualisations on international issues such as world peace and world government amply demonstrate the internationalist vision of Lohia. And, New Socialism, undoubtedly, remains the basic theoretical construct for

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which Lohia is reckoned as the frontal figure of the socialist thought and movement in India. What follows is a synoptic analysis of the main currents of the political and social thoughts of Ram Manohar Lohia.

POLITICAL THOUGHT OF LOHIA

As an academically trained intellectual, Lohia always looked at the things in a perspective. Indeed, it may be argued that the freshness and plausibility of the political thought[6] of Lohia owed much of its substance to his context-driven analysis of the various issues and ideologies. Hence, before setting on to explore the dominant ideological frameworks and their suitability for the Indian circumstances, he tried to analyse the dynamics of civilisational transformations taking place at various points of time in history. He appeared convinced in the veracity of cyclical theory of history in so far as it helped in explaining the numerous ups and downs in the long history of a country or a civilisation such as India. Moreover, applying the canons of the cyclical theory of history, Lohia went on to modify the theory of dialectical materialism of Marx by emphasising that the element of intellectual consciousness plays equally, if not more, significant role in shaping the broad contours of a particular historical event and phase along with the economic factors. He, therefore, stressed the need for evolving a new intellectual format in which the factor of spirit or intellectual consciousness, articulated through the general aims of society, could be combined with the factor of matter or economic aims, expressed through the modes of production, might be visualised in an autonomous relationship in order to give an incisive understanding of history (see Lohia 1955).

CRITIQUE OF WESTERN IDEOLOGIES

Contextualising his theoretical explorations in the particular circumstances prevailing in India, Lohia argued in the favour of evolving an indigenous theoretical construct which could be efficient and effective in addressing the issues confronting the country. His passionate plea for an indigenous theoretical construct for India

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was based on his firm belief in the inefficacy of the dominant western ideological formulations in terms of socialism, Marxism and capitalism. Significantly, it was thus quite interesting to note that though infatuated with basic precepts of socialism as the viable ideology to steer developing countries like India on the path of an egalitarian and all-round socio-economic development of the people, he appeared doubly sure of the inadequacy of European socialism to be the panacea for the ills of countries like India. Diagnosing the malady of ethnocentrism in the core of European socialism, he argued that such an ideological construct remained appropriate to serve the interests of a particular variety of socio-economic contexts, such as European, and found its utility, if any, for the non-European countries to be very minuscule (Lohia 1963: 321). He, therefore, appeared quite succinct in pointing out the practical contrasts in the development of European socialism in two varying contexts. While the development of socialism in Europe, *sui generis* as it was, remained gradual, constitutional and distributive, its transplanted development in non-European societies had been revolutionary, extra-constitutional and production-oriented (Mehta 1996: 247). In sum, Lohia, thus, argued for subjecting European socialism to critical examination vis-à-vis its suitability for non-European societies. On his own, he seemed sure of the futility of an imported ideology to serve the interests of developing societies and argued for and successfully attempted to evolve New Socialism for India.

After socialism, Lohia turned his attention to Marxism to find it as unsuitable for the developing countries as socialism. To him, Marxism appeared to be a theory marred by a host of internal contradictions which remained at the root of its unsuitability as a system of social organisation. Lohia's critical perspective on Marxism encompassed almost all the vital components constituting the core of Marxist thought. For instance, Lohia vehemently disapproved of the Marxian analysis of historical materialism establishing the unilinear growth of social organisation from primitive state of things to the stage of communism. Critical of ethnocentrism even in the Marxian analysis, Lohia contended that empirical inputs in theorisation of Marxism as the counter ideology of capitalism were drawn from the particular circumstances prevailing in the colonial nations of Western Europe. The Marxist analysis, thus, obviously could not be fully used as an analytical tool to study

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and understand the conditions of the societies outside Western Europe. Even the doctrine of surplus value which remains at the heart of Marxist thought was criticised by Lohia as inadequate in explaining the pattern of exploitation in the colonies. In a nutshell, Lohia argued that Marxism was an inadequate theoretical construct to suit the requirements of societies of non-Western Europe.

Having chided European socialism and Marxism relentlessly, Lohia set on to scrutinise the theoretical foundations of capitalism in order to prove its limitations in resolving the issues of developing societies. Recognising that the basic roots of capitalism lay in individualistic rights with focus on the right to private property, he asserted that such a philosophy inevitably leads to widening of economic inequality. Moreover, unbridled lust for profit drives capitalists for more and more centralisation of the means of production in few hands, so that some sort of monopoly could be established over the market forces. This not only prepares the ground for the gradual destruction of the rules of fair play but also undermines the professed claims of freedom and liberty in such societies. At the same time, it turns out to be bane of the idea of an egalitarian social order and monopolises economic prosperity of the country in just a few hands. Lohia, therefore, found capitalism to be antithetical to the lofty ideals for which the national movements had been waged in various countries of the world. He argued that what such newly independent countries needed was some sort of proactive and forward-looking ideology of socio-economic development, not reactionary ideologies like capitalism.

NEW SOCIALISM

Lohia's scathing attack on the western ideological constructs appears to be aimed at preparing the ground for establishing socialism as the most appropriate theoretical format for steering India on the path of an equitable and all-round socio-economic development. However, it is interesting to note that even his ideology of socialism kept on getting improvised and enriched with newer intellectual inputs coming from Lohia from time to time. Thus, while he accepted socialism as the viable ideology for India and tried to conceptualise it in the light of the Gandhian inputs, he came out

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with the idea of New Socialism in 1959 with the plea that it offers a comprehensive system of socio-economic and political life for the people in India (Varma 1964: 552).

While conceptualising the notion of socialism, Lohia began by arguing that,

> ...the concept of socialism has too long lagged 'behind the cohorts of capitalism or of communism' and has lived 'on borrowed breath' leading to hesitancy in the action of socialists and that it must be developed, if it is to have an effective appeal, into a doctrine independent of other political ideologies. (Appadorai: 1987: 132)

He, therefore, sought to free the ideology of socialism from its borrowed breath by infusing the spirit of Gandhism in it. Overwhelmed as he was by the logical and spiritual consistency of Gandhian principles, Lohia asked for dovetailing the philosophy with the Gandhian doctrines of *satyagraha*, theory of ends–means consistency, economic system rooted in the small machine technology and, finally, the idea of political decentralisation. He maintained that the incorporation of Gandhian principles in the socialist philosophy would lend greater practicability of socialism to the Indian situations. In response to his colleagues asking for co-option of socialism with the Congress's seemingly centrist ideology, Lohia floated the 'equidistant theory'. Reiterating Lohia's growing faith in the Gandhian prescriptions on political and economic issues in India, the equidistant theory stood for maintenance of equal distance from both the Congress as well as the Communists on such issues. Thus, the core of socialism envisioned by Lohia drew its spirit and substance from the Gandhian principles of socio-economic and political reconstruction of the Indian society and formed the doctrinal foundations of socialism as conceptualised by Lohia (1952a). What, however, was unique to Lohia was his notion of decentralised socialism whose essence lay in emphasis on things like small machine, cooperative labour, village government and decentralised planning (Lohia 1952b).

Like other thinkers, circumstantial motivations and lived experiences appeared to have inspired Lohia to come out with his conception of New Socialism in 1959. Apparently more comprehensive in scope and reflective of the holistic vision of its proponent, the theory of New Socialism was founded on the basis of six fundamental elements encompassing both domestic as well as

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foreign aspects of the life of the people. These six elements were: egalitarian standards in the areas of income and expenditure, growing economic interdependence, world parliament system based on adult franchise, democratic freedoms inclusive of right to private life, Gandhian technique of individual and collective civil disobedience, and dignity and rights of common man. The cumulative impact of the theory of New Socialism, argued Lohia, would be in providing such a complex web of system of life for the people that they would not only be able to live an egalitarian and contented life within the country but would also aspire to become a part of the world government. Thus, the theory of New Socialism seems to be either a reflection of the reiteration of the cherished ideals of Lohia or his growing detachment from the realities of life in the country paving way for utopianism in his political thinking to a large extent.

MODEL OF POLITICAL SYSTEM FOR INDIA

As a system of government, Lohia stood by the idea of democracy to provide for basic institutional framework of government in India. However, he also expressed his anxiety with democracy having the tendency of turning into a sterile—and sometimes oppressive—model, if not adequately antidoted by positive orientations in the policies and programmes of the government. He, therefore, argued for the adaptation of the system of democracy to the complex and unique socio-economic conditions prevailing in the country. He, for instance, expressed himself in favour of guaranteeing basic fundamental freedoms of the people, provided it was ensured that the basic needs of each and every citizen would be fulfilled. In his opinion, the notion of democracy must not be confined to affording the people certain civil and political rights, but be construed in such a way that it leads to provision of such socio-economic conditions where nobody remains without securing the basic minimum needs of life.

In so far as the system of government is concerned, Lohia's creditable contribution seems to be his model of four pillars of state called the 'Chaukhamba Model'. This model was contextualised within the framework of decentralised democratic polity Lohia recommended for the country. In such a system, he called for the

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operationalisation of the concept of 'permanent civil disobedience' which would act as a perpetual antidote against any sort of injustice. Thus, considering village, *mandal* (district), province and centre as the four pillars of the decentralised system of government, Lohia unconventionally sought to dovetail the lower levels like village and *mandal* with the police and welfare functions (Lohia 1956: 132). However, later, reiterating his support for the idea of world government, he argued for the creation of the 'fifth pillar' also, which would be in the form of the world government (Varma 1964: 552).

Lohia argued for acknowledging and right placing of the ideas of religion and politics in order to develop the infrastructures of the political system. However, the imprudent admixture of the two unavoidably leads to communal fanaticism amongst various communities whose repercussions for the country are fatal. For instance, in one of his lesser known works, *Guilty Men of India's Partition* (2000), he was categorical in exposing the errors and untruths which were propagated in the name of religion ultimately leading to partition of the country. Outlining the basic causes of partition, he unhesitatingly chided the selected persons whom he squarely held responsible for India's partition (see Lohia 2000). Thus, the main contours of the political thought of Lohia cover a wide range of spectrum touching most of the pressing problems of the political processes and institutions in the country.

SOCIAL THOUGHTS OF LOHIA

The analytical incisiveness of Lohia's intellectual pursuits naturally led him to examine the social problems of India and suggest probable solutions to such problems. Analysing the Indian social structure, he asserted that universal male domination and the obnoxious caste system happen to be the two greatest evils of the Indian society. He attributed the prevalence of poverty to these two factors and called on the youth to become the bearer of a social revolution in the country. At the heart of such a revolution, he argued, lay the notions of 'constructive militancy' and 'militant construction'. While constructive militancy stood for positive channelisation of the vigour and zeal of the youths, the idea of militant construction meant the radical nature of the constructive programmes to be

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carried out by the people. Thus, his assessment of the problems and suggestions of the solutions to such problems prove the radicalism of his thought and actions.

Providing a macro analytical framework to the problem of caste in India, Lohia emphasised the inherent tussle between the forces perpetuating caste and the forces bent on introducing class perspective in the society. In such a conflict, while the idea of caste represent the evil forces of conservatism, primordial affinities and inertia, the notion of class becomes the beholder of the virtues of dynamism and social mobilisation in society. However, Lohia avers that this confrontation between the two remains almost unending owing to the fact that two sets of forces keep on changing sides leading to castes fragmenting into classes and classes occasionally metamorphosing into castes (Lohia 1955: 51). Such a seeming duality between the castes and classes did not seem plausible for Lohia and he kept on looking for ways and means to rid India of the inherent evils in her social structure.

Lohia, therefore, came with the idea of 'seven revolutions' or *sapta kranti* to infuse a new sense of dynamism and vigour in the Indian social system (Pandey and Mishra 2002). These seven revolutions are to be materialised in the form of: equality between man and women; struggle against political, economic and spiritual inequality based on skin colour; removal of inequality between backward and high castes based on traditions, and special opportunity for the backwards; measures against foreign enslavement in different forms; economic equality by way of planned production and removal of capitalism; measures against unjust encroachments on private life; and non-proliferation of weapons in conjunction with reliance on *satyagraha*. The most significant aspect of the seven revolutions of Lohia appears to be the reflection of his utmost desire to bring about the greatest degree of socio-economic equality amongst the people. More importantly, the idea of equality to Lohia did not consist of only material equality in terms of equitable distribution of economic resources but also consisted of a higher degree of spiritual equality coming from the innate feeling of the individuals that they are equal like others in society (Lohia 1963: 236).

Amongst the other aspects of his social thought, his continuous emphasis on Hindi language being made, as far as possible, the

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language of masses remains significant. Interestingly, Lohia himself was well-versed with a number of foreign languages such as German and English. Indeed, it appeared in consonance with Lohia's indelible passion for indigenous and native aspects of life being given preponderance in comparison to imported or imposed values and institutions drawn from an alien ambience. Hence, Lohia seemed quite pained at finding reluctance on the part of the government to give an impetus to Hindi as the mother tongue of the people. Lohia vehemently argued for the progressive replacement of English by Hindi as the official language in the country. Moreover, he averred that the ethos of democracy could not be delved deep in the hearts of the people unless Hindi becomes the language of administrative and judicial systems in India. In sum, thus, Lohia's social thoughts reflected his deep sense of critical understanding of the problems of Indian social structure and a bunch of plausible solutions to overcome such problems.

LOHIA AS AN INTERNATIONALIST

A relatively understudied aspect of the life and thought of Lohia appears to be his subtle standing as a scholar having deep sense of belonging to the issues and perspectives of international affairs. His first exposure to the niceties of international relations apparently goes back to his stay in Berlin during the 1930s, when he participated in the proceedings of the League of Nations at Geneva and tried to understand the position of government of India on various issues. Subsequently, his appointment as the first secretary of the foreign affairs department of the Congress helped him to evolve his own understanding and perspective on the affairs outside the country. For instance, he decried the much appreciated policy of non-alignment as propounded by Nehru and argued for India having certain formidable and reliable friends abroad to give a boost to India's standing in the international affairs.

Despite arguing against India's neutrality in the world affairs, Lohia vied for the development of a third force in international relations consisting of the newly independent countries of Asia. He expressed opinion in support of India signing treaties of friendship with Burma, Nepal, Ceylon and other independent countries of

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South-East Asia which could gradually develop into a permanent federation. Lohia believed that if such a federation could come into existence, the world could 'be made safe for democracy and permanent peace' (cited in Ghosh 1984: 382). Indeed, it was Lohia's passionate plea for democracy and peace in developing countries which apparently led to his forays in the national movement of Nepal and his lifelong friendship with the leaders of Nepali Congress. Thus, the socialist vision of Lohia did not remain confined to the affairs of India alone but also went to countries like Nepal to inspire them to fight for the cause of democracy and rights of the people. Later, continuing his anti-imperialist stance, Lohia decried the Portuguese occupation of Goa.

Significantly, in most of the theoretical interventions of Lohia, the idea of world government and world peace found prominent place. For instance, in his theorisation on New Socialism, Lohia was unequivocal in emphasising the need for a world parliament system based on the principles of adult franchise. Similarly, his notion of 'seven revolutions' consisted of the element of non-proliferation of weapons as one of the elements which lay at the core of sustainable international peace and security. Enriched by the Gandhian input of non-violence and *satyagraha*, Lohia's conceptualisation of international peace lay mainly in the fostering of mutually socio-economically beneficial relations amongst various nations of the world which would minimise frictions amongst them. His suggestion for the creation of a third force based on friendship treaties amongst developing countries was presumably in anticipation of this beneficial cooperation, which could lead to the creation of a permanent federation amongst them auguring well for world peace and tranquillity.

The most significant theoretical intervention of Lohia in the realm of international relations appears to be his idea of world parliament and the eventual establishment of a world government with limited powers. It was his firm belief in the practical operationalisation of such an idea which inspires us to call him a true internationalist. Indeed, Lohia held on to his ground on the issue of world government despite people calling his idea utopian and impracticable. Reinforcing his faith in the idea, he modified his notion of 'four pillars of state' to include the 'fifth pillar' in it in the form of the world government. What, however, was really remarkable

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was his attempt of giving practical manifestation to his thoughts on the subject. He established the World Development Council and tried to set up world government to maintain peace in the world. Daringly, he once travelled without passport to Myanmar in support of his call for an international order free from visa and passport regimes.

Thus, as a true internationalist, Lohia's international vision appears amazingly refreshing and unconventional keeping in mind his overwhelming faith in the operational viability of such a vision. For instance, though a number of philosophers had argued for world peace, it was probably Lohia who envisioned locating world peace in the realm of socio-economic and political cooperation amongst countries. And, most strikingly, what put Lohia above all the other internationalist theoreticians was his quest for practical realisation of the ideal of world government and barrier-free regime of international movement of people by showing the way to others by doing things himself first, lest they might question the innate conformity between his thoughts and actions.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Lohia was a political thinker having his indomitable faith in indigenous and traditional institutions and ideas of India. As a result, most, if not all, of his theoretical formulations have had their inspirations, roots and concretisation on the basis of things prevailing in the country in older times. At the same time, he was also a believer in the ideological purity of his thoughts and did not hesitate to break away from his socialist colleagues like JP and others when he found them tilting towards Congress for certain extraneous considerations. Indeed, despite beginning his political life from the platform of Congress, anti-Congressism remained the benchmark of political activism of Lohia in the post-independence times. What was, however, a less known idea about Lohia's political contemplation was his deep and informed opinion about the foreign policy of India and his call for the seemingly utopian ideas of world parliament and world government. What is most laudable is his ability to unite anti-Congress political forces under one platform. The outcome was the formation of coalition governments in several

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states in 1967. It is true that the experiment was ephemeral, yet it had set a trend that loomed large with the consolidation of coalition government in India since the 1999 national election.

NOTES

1. For a succinct account of the body of socialist thought, see Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2000).
2. For a contextual articulation of the ideas of Lohia, see Pandey and Mishra (2002).
3. While most of the Indian thinkers have found their biographers and/or compilers of their thoughts, Lohia seems to be a loser on this count. In the form of biography, for instance, two very late publications include Grover (1998a) and Prasad (2007). A significant biographical work articulating Lohia's thought is Grover (1998b).
4. This forms the basis of his social thought which is explained in the text.
5. This is Lohia's formulation of decentralisation of power.
6. For a lucid presentation of the political thought of Lohia, see Pillai (1994) and/or Prasad (1989).

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11 Subhas Chandra Bose

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To provide an analysis of Bose's early life and work.
- To explain the basic elements of Bose's political ideology.
- To explore the position of Bose on Hindu orthodoxy.

Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–?) was a nationalist par excellence. His primary aim was to win freedom from the British rule. Appreciative of militant means as opposed to Gandhian non-violence, Bose pursued a different line of political thinking which ran counter to his colleagues in the Congress. It was Bose who not only challenged the central and regional Gandhian leadership most successfully, but also provided a broad platform for many of those who held position opposed to Gandhi and Gandhism. The Indian National Army (INA) connection and 'the springing tiger' image of Bose are well-known; but equally interesting was his political career in which he articulated his distinct nationalist ideas that have not been addressed adequately in the available literature. Compared with other nationalist leaders, Bose had a relatively narrow span of political life because during his 19 years, 1921–40, he was in jail for more than six years and away from India for three years. He was considered one of the most dangerous of the freedom fighters, in part because of his radical stance within the Congress, but mainly because of his intimate association with 'revolutionary terrorism'.

HIS EARLY BACKGROUND

Subhas Chandra Bose was born in 1897, the ninth child and sixth son of Janakinath and Probhabati Bose. He was descended from two fairly well-known *Kayastha* families of Bengal. In 1902, Subhas joined the Baptist Missionary School run by Protestant Europeans. Only 15 per cent students were Indians, with the rest being Europeans and Anglo-Indians. This was perhaps the first time in his life when he confronted racial discrimination between Indians and

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the rest. Articulating his discomfort and agony, he thus mentioned in *An Indian Pilgrim*,

> Because we were Indians, we could not sit for Scholarship examinations ... though in our annual examination many of us were topping the class. Anglo-Indian boys could join the volunteer corps and shoulder a rifle, but we could not. Small incidents like these began to open our eyes to the fact that as Indians we were a class apart, though we belonged to the same institutions. (Bose 1982: 25–26)

Emotionally alienated, Subhas never liked the school and expressed his resentment to his mother which was conceded and, in 1909, he was shifted to the Ravenshaw Collegiate School. This was a watershed in his life. Not only was he introduced to the fundamental values of Indian civilisation, he also came under the influence of the school's headmaster, Beni Madhav Das who inculcated in him 'a love of nature and an awareness of his social responsibility and moral values' (ibid.: 54). He was also drawn to the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda during this period which helped 'resolve his mental conflicts to a considerable extent' (ibid.: 32). According to him,

> ...the philosophy which I found in Vivekananda and in Ramkrishna came nearest to meeting my requirements and offered a basis on which to reconstruct my moral and practical life. It equipped me with certain principles with which to determine my conduct or line of action whenever any problem or crisis arose before my eyes. (ibid.: 54)

The young Bose was also attracted to Aurobindo Ghosh who was the most popular political leader in the 1903–08 anti-partition movement in Bengal. Bose admired Aurobindo not because of his mysticism but because of his ability to combine spiritualism with politics which was necessary for effective national service. What he displayed in his preference for the teachings of Vivekananda and Aurobindo revealed his tilt in favour of Extremism, a political ideology that caused alarm to the British authority in Bengal during the 1903–08 *Swadeshi* movement.

A major event that brought Subhas Chandra Bose considerable attention was the famous Oaten affair. In 1916, while he was a student of Presidency College, Calcutta, Bose was reported to have been

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involved in physically assaulting E.F. Oaten for his alleged racist remarks. It has not been clear whether Bose was one of those who hit Oaten. While writing about this incident in the College, Oaten was not categorical as to whether he saw Bose among those who actually attacked him. In his autobiography, which was written after a lapse of more than two decades, Bose mentioned that he was merely an eyewitness. Whatever Bose's actual role in this rather well-publicised affair, it caused alarm to the government of Bengal and Presidency College was shut temporarily. Bose was expelled from college. Not only did the Oaten affair make him 'a hero and a marked man' (Bose 1982: 80) it had also radically altered his perception about his future, as he himself stated,

> ...little did I then realise the inner significance of the tragic events of 1916. My Principal had expelled me, but he had made my future career. I had established a precedent for myself from what I could not easily depart in future. I had stood up with courage and composure in a crisis and fulfilled my duty. I had developed self-confidence as well as initiative, which was to stand me in good stead in future. I had a foretaste of leadership—though in a very restricted sphere—and of the martyrdom that it involves. In short, I had acquired character and could face the future with equanimity. (ibid.: 79–80)

Hardly had Bose settled for postgraduate studies in the University of Calcutta, when Janakinath urged him to go to England for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination. Once he got through in the civil service examination in 1920, he, however, did not lose time to decide. He resigned from the Civil Service in 1921 because he felt that it would be 'a criminal act'[1] to serve a foreign bureaucracy which had no moral right to be there. Defending his resignation as the best possible course of action, he urged others serving the British government to sever connection with the administration. The best way to end the British hegemony was, as he argued, to withdraw from it because 'every government servant whether he be a petty *chaprasi* or a provincial Governor only helps to the stability of the British Government in India.'[2]

In May 1921, Bose returned to India. This was a period when Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. On his arrival in Bombay, Subhas had an interview with the Mahatma 'to get from the leader of the campaign a clear conception of his plan of action' (Bose 1964: 54–55). The young Bose did not appear to be convinced

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by Gandhi's response. He left Bombay with utter disappointment; he was, however, clear in his mind that 'there was a deplorable lack of clarity in the plan which the Mahatma had formulated and that he himself did not have clear idea of the successive stages of the campaign which would bring India to her cherished goal of freedom' (Bose 1964: 54–55).

His search for a guru remained yet to be fulfilled and his political baptism was thus delayed. He left Gandhi disappointed. But he was enthused by C.R. Das, one of the top Congress leaders of the period, who impressed him so much that after his first meeting, he acclaimed Das as a leader who was conscious of his exact role, that is, of a practical politician (ibid.: 55). During the long discussion, Bose felt that Das was a leader of his choice 'who could give all that he had and who could demand from others all they could give' (ibid.). What impressed Bose was Das' admiration for 'youthfulness which was not a shortcoming but a virtue' (ibid.). When Bose made an entry in the freedom struggle, the nationalist movement had undergone a radical ideological transformation that led to a simultaneous change in the process of political mobilisation. By incorporating new actors in the anti-British movements, the political activists of this era introduced new dimensions to the broader political struggle. In general, the period thus saw an unprecedented awareness among the so-called peripheral sections of society which assumed different forms in different parts of Bengal. Since politics was neither an exclusively *bhadralok* affair nor confined to Calcutta only, the post-C.R. Das Bengal Congress leadership strove to incorporate the hitherto neglected actors to strengthen the anti-British platform.

BOSE'S POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

In 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose defeated Mahatma Gandhi's candidate, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, for the Congress presidency. For the moment, he appeared to have projected a radical alternative to Congress's Gandhian leadership. But his failure to organise and consolidate a support base to successfully challenge 'the saintly politics' (Morris-Jones 1971: 250–53) of Gandhi proved how limited was the appeal of his 'radical' politics. What followed the 1939 Congress presidential election is well-known: Bose escaped

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from India and, as the INA leader, made an abortive attempt to fight the British during the Second World War. His devotion to the nationalist cause and sacrifice for the nation provided him a unique place in the Indian freedom struggle; but his misreading of the Indian situation as well as international politics made him 'a devil or muddle-headed' to his opponents and 'a confused mind groping in the dark' (Chakrabarty 1986) to those trying to understand his political ideology.

For the anti-Subhas lobby, Bose's long term and apparently close association with Mussolini and Hitler was enough to identify him with fascism. But this appears to be an over-simplification. After a meeting with Palme Dutt, one of the founders of the Communist Party of Great Britain, in 1938, Bose seems to have revised his attitude towards the fascist powers. But although he criticised fascist Italy for its imperialist expedition, he nonetheless appreciated its ideology. To him, Fascism meant merely an aggressive form of nationalism. Bose's critical appraisal of fascism indicated his constant search for an appropriate political ideology for India. This was perhaps the reason why, at odd moments, he sought an alternative form of national development in communism. To him, it was neither communism nor fascism alone, but a *synthesis* of communism and fascism which would ensure India's all-round development.

Although he realised the usefulness of mass organisation, he never attempted it seriously. In terms of political practice, he seemed to prefer revolutionary terrorism which, however, lost its significance as a result of Congress's professed attempts to extend organised politics to the masses after the 1921 Non-Cooperation–Khilafat Movement. From the outset, he attempted to arrive at a synthesis of political ideologies incorporating egalitarianism, discipline and revolutionary terrorism. In his first speech as the Mayor of Calcutta in 1930, he thus declared that the best course of action for India was to combine justice, equality and love that constituted the basis of socialism with the efficiency and discipline of fascism. From then onwards, he began talking increasingly about the synthesis of fascism and socialism which, he believed, had to be adapted to Indian conditions and traditions. On this ideological foundation, Bose based his anti-Gandhi attacks. He had already denounced Gandhi at the 1929 Student's Conference at Lahore for the Mahatma's views against student participation in politics.

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In his presidential address to the Lahore meeting, Bose said that since all national activity was in reality political in character, the ban was inconceivable. By drawing attention to the defects of Gandhiji's Sabarmati School, he substantiated the point about the inadequacies of 'metaphysical speculation' which constituted the basis of this school of thought:

> The actual effect of the propaganda carried on by the Sabarmati School of thought is to create a feeling and an impression that modernism is bad, that large-scale production is an evil, (it is as if) we must endeavour to the best of our abilities to go back to the days of the bullockcart.[3]

What he hinted at was further developed in his presidential address at the 1931 Karachi Conference of the *All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha*, a youth organisation in Punjab. Bose denounced the Gandhi-led Congress leadership and put forward an alternative view of the way the organisation ought to function. His goal was the establishment of 'a socialist republic',[4] designed to achieve complete all-round and undiluted freedom which, he argued, was the antithesis of the Congress programme based on adjustment between landlord and tenant, between capitalist and wage-earner, between the so-called upper and depressed classes, and between men and women.

Bose developed this theme further in his 1933 London address on the anti-imperialist struggle and *samyavad*. He saw Gandhian civil disobedience as an effective means of paralysing the administration, but did not think it adequate to win independence unless it was backed by violent attacks on the British government, which he said had already brought success to Irish freedom fighters. He, thus, urged the anti-Gandhi section of the Congress to organise itself on the platform of *Hindustani Samyavadi Sangh*, an organisation striving to provide a correct line to Congress and fight the colonial power by violent means. The British authorities naturally showed extreme concern at Bose's plans to achieve *samyavad* which revealed that, unlike Gandhi, he was thinking in terms of a political movement aimed not merely at India's political independence but also social revolution.

While in London in 1933, Bose was talking of *samyavad*, the same year he travelled to Europe and sought interviews with Hitler and Mussolini. Although impressed by Mussolini, Bose was somewhat

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disappointed with Hitler's attitude. He felt that Fuhrer's comment in *Mein Kamf* that as a German he would rather see India under British domination than that of any other nation was an attempt to curry favour with the British. Bose, in fact, went to the extent of saying that Hitler was a severe as well as dangerous psychopathic personality in whom *Satan* dominated.

Though Bose was disappointed in 1936 when he was denied an interview with Hitler, he saw the Nazi chief in 1942, when he was organising an Indian Legion in Germany. But he was more in rapport with Mussolini who, unlike Hitler, did not explicitly state race ideology; he espoused the idea of establishing cordial relations between East and West as a stepping stone towards world peace. Bose's increasing contact with Mussolini attracted him more towards fascism in which he had found several 'good points' (Bose 1964: 314). In an interview in Italy, Bose declared how greatly he was interested in fascism, although to him fascism and 'hot nationalism' were identical.

His European sojourn was, on the whole, productive: not only did Bose come closer to Mussolini, he also published *Indian Struggle* in 1934, which indicated much of his future political ideology. He rejected outright the Gandhian method of winning hearts as well as the Congress's decision to cooperate with the forthcoming (1935) Constitution. Instead, he sought a synthesis of fascism and communism claiming this to be the most suitable to Indian conditions. Unlike Nehru, who rejected the synthesis formula as nothing more than a crude and brutal effort of the present capitalist order to preserve itself at any cost, Bose saw it as the only appropriate means for India's salvation. Though he was impressed by fascism while he was writing his book, he later changed his opinion considerably. Not only was he critical of fascism for its imperialist expedition, in his 1938 presidential address at the Haripura session of Congress, Bose denounced the leadership principle of the fascist party, as it eroded democracy within the party. This growing disillusionment with fascism led Bose to turn to the goal of national reconstruction along socialistic lines. In order to benefit the have-nots, he sought a comprehensive scheme of industrial development under state ownership and state control. In contrast to Gandhi who was opposed to industrialism of any kind, Bose reiterated his faith in massive industrialisation

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as the only means for India's economic development. He did not reject the cottage industry formula altogether. In fact, he wanted the revival of cottage industries where there were possibilities of their surviving the inevitable competition of factories.

Not only was he interested in industrialisation, he was also aware of the importance of agriculture in India's economy. He believed that to improve the plight of those involved in agriculture, the state had to adopt a radical land reform programme involving abolition of the *zamindari* system. In his prescribed economy, the state, on the advice of a planning commission, would he argued, have to adopt a comprehensive scheme for socialising our entire agricultural and industrial system in the spheres of both production and appropriation. In suggesting these ways for India's modernisation, Bose did not differ greatly from Jawaharlal Nehru. With his insistence on a modern industrial state, Bose simultaneously emphasised the foundation of a new social structure entailing the abolition of discrimination on the basis of religion, sex, caste and creed. He hinted at this in his 1929 Rangpur address, but did not elaborate. At the 1929 Midnapur Youth Conference, Bose spelt out that to achieve *samyavad*, that is, social and political equality, caste must be abolished and women should be freed to enjoy equal rights and responsibilities with men in every walk of life. Economic inequality must not be tolerated any longer and every individual, irrespective of caste, creed and sex should be given equal opportunities for education and advancement.

In ideological terms, Bose was in favour of a synthesis of communism and fascism drawing on what he felt 'the common traits'[5] between the two. While elaborating his views, he thus argued that:

> ... in spite of the antithesis between Communism and Fascism, there are certain traits common to both. Both Communism and Fascism believe in the supremacy of the State over the individual. Both denounce parliamentarian democracy. Both believe in party rule. Both believe in the dictatorship of the party and in the ruthless suppression of all dissenting minorities. Both believe in a planned industrial development. These common traits will form the basis of the new synthesis [which was characterised as] *samyavada*—an Indian word, which means literally 'the doctrine of synthesis or equality'. (Bose 1964: 314)

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Bose's idea of synthesis is a comment on how to organise the state. Opposed to liberal democracy of the western variety, he put forward a unique third path borrowing from state-centric fascism and communism, despite serious contradiction between these two ideologies. His primary concern was to win freedom by force. Since the Gandhian non-violent method was reconciliatory, Bose was not sure whether it would result in India's freedom. Hence, he was in favour of building of an army even with fascist support. *Samyavad* was just an endorsement of his ideas on the statecraft which was, he thought, most appropriate for winning freedom and also for constructing a strong India in its aftermath.

BOSE AND HIS IDEA OF FUTURE INDIA

By challenging the foundations of the traditional Hindu society, Bose provided the blueprint for a new society. But he was not quite free from caste prejudices because as late as 1937, in his autobiography, he referred to his own high caste, perhaps to highlight his relatively higher position in the social hierarchy. As regards Hindu–Muslim discrimination too, Bose was ambivalent until the formation of the INA. It is true that none of the Congress leaders, including Bose, succeeded in evolving a concrete solution to the Hindu–Muslim problem in Bengal. The Congress, in order to protect Hindu *rentier* interests, never allowed East Bengal peasants to pursue the anti-*zamindari* cause. In such a complex situation where the Hindu–Muslim division largely corresponded to that between *zamindar*s and *ryot*s, with the Congress committed to protecting the former, Bose's declaration to achieve *samyavad* seems pious.

Subhas Chandra Bose was critical of the federation scheme as enunciated in the Government of India Act, 1935. In a personal letter, he argued that though the 1937 election results signified the strength of the Congress party in spite of divide and rule, the Congress should not accept office until the Governors of the provinces gave an assurance that they would not interfere in the work of the ministers. In his article, 'Federation of India', published in *The Tribune* (Lahore), he was critical of the entire arrangement under

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the Act, which was, he felt, something like democratic government in the provinces with 'unbridled autocracy' at the centre (Bose 1964: 315).

He argued strongly against the idea of 'transferred' and 'reserved' subjects as this vested *de facto* authority in the British bureaucracy and, thus, left little power and meagre funds with the provincial ministries. Moreover, he felt that since the federal legislature would draw its members from British India and the princely states, it would be a forum in which nominees of the princess would join the British to oppose the progressive policies of Congress. Though aware of the limited nature of provincial autonomy, he was willing, like his mentor, C.R. Das, to accept office on an experimental basis. For instance although the Bengal Congress refused to form a coalition with the Krishak Praja Party (KPP) in 1937, the very next year Bose tried to arrive at an agreement with the dissident KPP over ministry formation.

In his 1938 Haripura presidential address and an article in *The Tribune*, Bose described the kind of state he preferred. Hinting that a federal arrangement was futile, he again and again emphasised the need for a strong centralised state as the instrument of ensuring the well-being of the people. What was in embryo became clear in his 1944 Tokyo speech. 'We must have' Bose insisted 'a political system—a state—of an authoritarian character.'[6] Thus, he remarked that 'since no other Constitution can flourish in India and it is to India's good that she should be ruled by a dictator to begin with.... She suffers from so many ills that only a ruthless dictator can cure her.'[7]

He also argued for the creation of a well-organised and disciplined all-India party to attain national goals. While in Europe, Bose was impressed by the organisational strength of the fascist and Nazi parties and this may well have convinced him of the importance of a well-disciplined party as the instrument of India's regeneration and all-round advancement. His faith in a national centralised party was firm, and like other Congress leaders, Bose never approved of Mahatma Gandhi's idea of disbanding the Congress after independence. Instead, he insisted that the Congress party should take over power, assume responsibility for administration and put through its programme of reconstruction because 'only those who had won power could handle it properly.'[8]

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Though Bose was in favour of a strong state, centrally controlled by a well-organised party, he was also aware that this would lead to totalitarianism. In order to avoid the possibility, he insisted on (*a*) internal democracy in the Congress party, and *(b)* existence of more than one party. But at the same time, there was an element of contradiction in his formula for the containment of totalitarianism: a strong state centrally controlled by a well-organised party was likely to overrule the brakes he proposed. Nonetheless, Bose's idea provides a blueprint for independent India that, according to him, required a strong state under the guidance of a disciplined Congress party to build a vibrant nation in future.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Was Subhas Chandra Bose a totalitarian or a fascist? In view of his association with fascist stalwarts and his arguments for a strong centralised state, it is perhaps easy to say 'yes'. But in the Machiavellian fashion, Bose was negotiating with a specific reality which required some change. By aiming at India's liberation, he responded to the demands of his age, not differing very much from other Congress leaders in this regard. Bose became a class by himself only when he ignored the means as long as it suited the ends for which he strove. So, he preferred revolutionary terrorism to Gandhian non-violence, and was convinced that driving out the British mattered more than how it was done.

In this, Bose upheld the ideology of the periphery—Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra—which itself lost its appeal in view of Gandhi's drive to involve the masses with the Congress-led freedom struggle. Similarly, the selection of fascist powers as his foreign allies in the 'last fight' was determined largely by Kautilya's famous dictum regarding the enemy's enemy. Bose might have deliberately ignored the consequences of this association. Likewise, his proposed state—totalitarian or fascist—reflected the extent to which he was impressed by contemporary Germany and Italy. He never had a chance to see whether a centralised state with a well-disciplined party was appropriate to heterogeneous India. So, to put a specific label on him would not be historically justified.

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NOTES

1. Subhas Chandra Bose to Sarat Chandra Bose, 23 April 1921 (Bose 1980: 233).
2. Ibid.
3. 'Role of Youth Movement', speech delivered at the third session of All India Youth Congress on 25 December 1928, in Bose (1974: 42).
4. Subhas Chandra Bose referred to the idea of a socialist republic in his speech on 'Role of Youth Movement' which he delivered at the third session of All India Youth Congress on 25 December 1928 (Bose 1974: 42).
5. Bose developed his idea of synthesis in his *The Indian Struggle* (1964: 314–15).
6. *The Tribune*, 28 January 1938.
7. *Hindustan Standard*, 8 March 1946.
8. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 4 February 1936.

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12 V.D. Savarkar

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To elucidate Savarkar's nationalist interpretation of Indian history.
- To evaluate the social thought of Savarkar.
- To examine Savarkar's ideas on Hindutva.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883–1966) represented an unconventional strand of political thought in India in so far as he propounded a theory of cultural nationalism in contrast to the theory of territorial nationalism propounded by the leaders of the mainstream nationalist movement. The uniqueness of the personality and thinking of Savarkar may be gauged from the fact that while one school of thought calls him an 'ardent nationalist, heroic revolutionary and terrorist ... (who) won immortal fame by his daring political exploits in the early decades of the twentieth century' (Varma 1964: 377), the other demonises him as 'an angry, resentful, vengeful, violent and intolerant prophet' (Jyotirmaya Sharma 2003: 172). In fact, Savarkar gave a systematic articulation to the opinions held by many people in the country that the true resurgence of India as a distinguished part of the comity of nations could be facilitated only by rooting Indian nationalism in the cultural ethos of the Hindu religion. He was of the opinion that the real personality of India could be restored to her only by reviving her glorious past and reestablishing, what he called '*Hindu rashtra*'. Thus, the political philosophy of Savarkar appeared as a distinct ideological formulation having its focus on the homogeneity of the Hindu population living in a particular tract of land and having the urge to create a nation based on the cultural moorings of the majority of the people.

Historically, the tradition of intellectual explorations by Hindu revivalists found its articulation in two distinct streams that may be called as Hinduism[1] and Hindutva.[2] Despite having the same long term perspective of reestablishing the vitality, eternity and practicality of the Hindu way of life in India in the face of apparent loosening of faith amongst the people due to long years of subjugation by rulers of other religious faiths, the two streams

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differed on the idea of conceptualising the Hindu view of life. Hence, the votaries of Hinduism tried to conceptualise the idea of Hindu view of life as essentially religious–personal in nature without any ramification for other aspects of life. They argued that Hinduism needs to be construed as a set of religious–philosophical ideals affording a fulfilling and meaningful life to its followers. It was interpreted as visiting the domain of personal life of the individuals in the main, and setting forth a set of moral and ethical principles which would guide the conduct of people even in other spheres of life as well. Thus, bereft of any political agenda and parochial outlook, the reach of Hinduism was confined to provide for a code of moral and religious ethics only which the followers of the Hindu religion might imbibe to illuminate their individual behaviour in their public or private appearances. The reflection of the philosophy of Hinduism appears most remarkable in the writings and conducts of people like Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan.

As against the individualistic and restrictive conceptualisation of the idea of Hinduism, the notion of Hindutva was evolved by radical elements of the Hindu revivalist movements. They take a more strident position on the history, philosophy, legacies and future perspective of the Hindu way of life in India. In fact, the proponents of the ideology of Hindutva tried to envisage a comprehensive blueprint for the reconstruction of the politico-cultural system of the country in such a way that Hindus would get an absolute preponderance in the affairs of the country. The ideology of Hindutva, therefore, moves beyond the confines of religious and personal life of individuals and seeks to reconstruct a whole new world for Hindus by way of establishing the '*Hindu rashtra*' in the country.[3] Over the years, it has turned out to be a distinct political ideology that vies with the secular credentials of the country to have some degree of preponderance in the politico-cultural life of the people. As stated earlier, the ideology of Hindutva was given the shape of a refined and viable theoretical construct, to some extent, by Savarkar in his various writings and speeches. Later on, this ideology was adopted by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) as the intellectual input in its pursuits for the '*Hindu rashtra*' in India. Indeed, the entire band of Hindu rightist political and cultural formations in the country draws their ideological sustenance from the ideology of Hindutva propounded by Savarkar.

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Despite being best known as the proponent of the ideology of Hindutva, intellectual explorations of Savarkar did not remain confined to that only, though, Hindutva indeed remained the basic ideological construct which underpinned all his writings and speeches over the years. In fact, manifesting his nationalist orientations from the very beginning, he was the first one to call the revolt of 1857 as India's first war of independence. Moreover, he was one of India's foremost freedom fighters. The range of his intellectual explorations went beyond the bounds of political ideas and he proposed a number of valuable suggestions to reform the Hindu society as well.[4] Hence, an attempt has been made in this chapter to present a contextual and analytical study of the social and political ideas of Savarkar with special reference to his formidable theoretical construct called Hindutva.

A LIFE FOR THE HINDU CAUSE

Savarkar was born on 28 May 1883 in a traditional Brahman family in Maharashtra at a time when the Indian renaissance was manifested in diverse interpretations of the past, present and future of the country. While a section of the Indian society had started presenting an intellectual critique of the political and economic dimensions of the British rule in India, certain other sections were busy in reviving and reinvigorating the religious–cultural traditions and legacies of their people. Hence, Savarkar's childhood acculturation appears to have been made in deep inculcation of the values of the Hindu religion and culture, and exhortations of reviving the glorious legacies left by the great Maratha rulers like Shivaji. Otherwise, it would not have been possible for a child of just 10 years of age to feel so instigated at the hearing of the news of communal riots in the United Provinces that he gathered a group of dozen-odd students of his school and stoned a place of worship to take an apparent revenge for the killing of Hindus in that riot. Besides his deep pain at the beating of Hindus at the hands of people of other religions, Savarkar was equally anguished at the brutalities of the British rule in India which not only hanged, suppressed and exploited the Indians but also devalued the pious and glorious religious–cultural traditions of the Hindus in the country. He, therefore, developed a vengeful attitude towards British rule in India and expressed his willingness to die fighting for the

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independence of the country. Thus, from his early childhood, two distinct persuasions of his life appeared to be his passion: to work for the cause of the Hindus and fight for the independence of the country.

Savarkar's nationalist activities earned him the ire of the British and he was expelled from Ferguson College, Poona. However, with the recommendations of Lokmanya Tilak, he was offered to study in London by the prominent Indian revolutionary Shyamji Krishna Varma. Consequently, Savarkar remained a student–revolutionary in London during the period of 1906 to 1910, after which he was arrested and sentenced to 50 years of imprisonment at Andamans. Savarkar's stay and intimate interactions with Indian revolutionaries in London apparently helped sharpen his understanding of the history and causes of the denigration of India as a nation for a long period of time. In fact, his innovative and pioneering interpretation of the revolt of 1857 as India's first war of independence came in the form of his book *The Indian War of Independence of 1857* in 1908 which was quickly proscribed by the British government. After spending rigorous life of more than a decade in *Kala Pani* (solitary confinement), Savarkar was brought back to Maharashtra and interned at Ratnagiri till 1937. Thus, more than two and half decades of solitary confinement of Savarkar afforded him the opportunity to carry out his intellectual explorations into the various aspects of the problems and solutions to the past and present of the Indian people. For instance, his classical text on the ideology of Hindutva came with the same title in 1923, manifesting its composition having taken place during his solitary confinement in the Andamans.

Savarkar was released from confinement in 1937 as a restless person, like M.N. Roy, not finding the ongoing mainstream nationalist movement adequately reflecting the ideological perspectives he articulated in his various writings. He seemingly did not subscribe to the Gandhian ideals of non-violence and *satyagraha* which were the dominant paradigms of the national movement in the country. Alternatively, he stood for a violent and rebellious mode of struggle in the country, given the unjustified, forcible and brutal rule of the country by the British. As he wrote,

> ...so long as that divine age has not arrived, so long as the highly auspicious end remains only in the lines of saintly poets and in the

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> prophecies of the divinely inspired, and so long as ... the human mind has to be busy eradicating sinful and aggressive tendencies, so long rebellion, bloodshed and revenge cannot be purely sinful. (Savarkar 1949: 273)

Resultantly, instead of joining the rank and file of the Congress party to fight for the independence of the country, he joined the Tilakite Democratic Swaraj Party, a relatively unknown entity espousing the cause of Indian nationalism based on the lines of the radical *swaraj* as advocated by Lokmanya Tilak. However, soon he found this party's activities to be inconsequential for the future of the country and joined Hindu Mahasabha to become its President soon and retaining the position till 1945. During the Presidency of Savarkar, Hindu Mahasabha gained much, both in its influence on the Hindu society and sharpening of its ideological commitments. In his presidential addresses,[5] Savarkar extensively elaborated his ideas on the *Hindu rashtra*, as presented in his previous publication, *Hindutva*.

During his stint at the helm of affairs of the Hindu Mahasabha, Savarkar tried to reinvigorate the organisational and ideological commitment of the party by infusing in it his own revolutionary and heroic ideas. But the expected turnaround in the nature and perspective of the mass of Hindu society could not be brought about by the activities of Hindu Mahasabha. As a result, Savarkar resigned from the party and decided in favour of a solitary life for himself given the unpropitious conditions for him to work with conviction and resolution for the independence of the country. Hence, the later phase of the life of Savarkar was spent in relative isolation, barring occasional intellectual interventions in criticising the policies of the government. Savarkar expired in 1966 at a ripe age of 83 years. The intellectual explorations of Savarkar during his lifetime remained enmeshed in his indelible belief in the veracity and practicability of the establishment of *Hindu rashtra* in India. Even his forays in the national movement appeared to be guided by his unfailing emphasis on Hindu values like making supreme sacrifices and dying for the cause of motherland. Despite his firm and unwavering belief in the idea of *Hindu rashtra*, its limited reception by the people seemingly disappointed Savarkar and compelled him to go into oblivion in the last phase of his life.

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SAVARKAR'S NATIONALIST INTERPRETATION OF INDIAN HISTORY

Savarkar was a trenchant critic of the occupation of India by foreign invaders in the form of the Muslim and English rulers. He held the view that India, which he preferred to call as 'Hindusthan', rightfully belonged to Hindus and her forcible occupation by non-Hindus was a patent act of aggression which must be resented and repulsed by all Hindus of the country. Accordingly, despite conceding the relative greatness of rulers like Akbar, he was categorical that Akbar was 'from our Hindu point of view, foreign, belonging to another religion and mean-minded, as such he should be decried by us, Hindus' (Savarkar 1971: 402). He was quite euphoric in eulogising the successes of Hindu warriors, like Shivaji, in their struggles against the Muslim rulers and generals, and called upon Hindus to emulate the illustrious examples set by these valiant ancestors of the Hindus.

The nationalist interpretation of history found its eloquent articulation in Savarkar in his tract, *Hindu Pad Padshahi*, published in 1925 and written to analyse the rise of Maratha power in Maharashtra, even in the face of Muslim predominance in other parts of the country. He commended the valiance and superb military leadership of Shivaji and interpreted his victory as a befitting reply to the policy of barbaric aggression, violent usurpation of power, fanatical hatred and intolerance of the Muslim rulers. He even went to the extent of putting the valour and idealism of the Marathas as superseding the valour and idealism of the previous Hindu rulers such as Harshvardhan and Pulakesin (Savarkar 1945: 230). Savarkar praised the system of governance adopted by Shivaji, as conforming to the system of governance as envisaged in the religious scriptures of the Hindus. His appreciation for the Maratha polity emanated from his perception that it was based on the infallible principles of *swadharma* and *swaraj*. He appreciated the democratic credentials of the ruling system of Shivaji and argued that such a system of governance would be the one suited to the needs of Hindus. Thus, in his interpretation of the history of India during medieval times, Savarkar's theoretical format remained focussed on Hindu nationalism which seemed to be an article of faith for him.

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Similarly, in his interpretation of the history of India in modern times, Savarkar's nationalistic orientations came to their best when he called the revolt of 1857 as India's first war of independence. This refreshing, innovative and nationalist interpretation of one of the most memorable events in the history of the country established Savarkar as India's foremost nationalist bent upon chiding the British rule to the hilt. He refuted the claims of British historians that the revolt of 1857 was just a sepoy mutiny having nothing to do with the general masses of the country and not reflecting any inherent disaffection of the people of India towards British rule in the country. He also disagreed with interpretations given by certain sections of the Indian intelligentsia that the revolt was meditated by the orthodox elements of the armed forces that were scarred at the idea of chewing greased cartridges. Nor did he accede to the idea that the revolt was the last and desperate attempts of certain Indian rulers such as the Begum of Oudh to resist the annexation of their states into the British Empire. He argued that though these might have been the incidental causes of the revolt, the fundamental motive of it, undoubtedly, was the liberation of the country from the clutches of the alien British rule. He was extremely appreciative of the valour, courage and readiness for supreme sacrifice of the leaders and the soldiers of the revolt who waged the struggle to throw the British out of India (Savarkar 1949: 207).

Savarkar argued that the revolt of 1857 was India's first war of independence owing to the fact that it, essentially, was the natural manifestation of the feeling of independence visiting the hearts and minds of the patriotic soldiers right from the western to the eastern parts of the country. He had tremendous admiration for this sense of innate freedom of the sepoys, as it was rooted in the indigenous ideals of *swadharma* and *swaraj*. Savarkar cited one of the leaders of the Revolt of 1857, the Maratha warrior Nana Sahib, who had been exterminated at a lonely place in the United Provinces, as harbouring the aspirations of liberating his motherland from the internecine skirmishes and setting up the 'United States of India' as an independent and prosperous country. He also drew upon the interpretations presented by European commentators who viewed the revolt of 1857 in broader perspective as having the characteristics of a mass-rising and nationalistic in nature.

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For instance, he quoted Charles Ball who had called the Mutiny a 'rebellion of a whole people' and Justin McCarthy who had said that the sepoys seized 'one of the great critical moments of history and converted a military mutiny into a national religious war' (quoted in Ghosh 1984: 247).

By way of his interpretation of the revolt as the first war of independence for India, Savarkar drew a number of remarkable conclusions having immense value, and reflective of his perceptions on the ongoing mainstream national movement in the country within the confines of the Gandhian ideals of non-violence and *satyagraha*. For instance, he had tremendous admiration for the participants of the first war of independence as they took up arms knowing well that no other method of struggle would serve the purpose of driving out the British from the country. Hence, he justified their actions as the best suited for a situation where the opponent is aggressive, brutal and bent upon crushing the Indians. As he argued, 'Therefore, the sword of Brutus is holy. Therefore, the *Baghanakha* of Shivaji is of fair fame. Therefore, the beheading of Charles I is a just deed. Therefore, the arrow of William Tell is divine' (Savarkar 1949: 274). Similarly, he appreciated the value system of the revolutionaries as he found them to be rooted in the indigenous Indian ideals of *swadharma* and *swaraj*.

In the final analysis, it may be argued that despite having Hindutva as the hallmark of his intellectual formulations, Savarkar's nationalist interpretation of the history of India appears quite refreshing and pioneering. One may not agree with his argument that a ruler like Akbar needed to be denounced merely because he did not happen to be a Hindu, but his emphasis on the inculcation of the indigenous values like *swadharma* and *swaraj* as the underlining elements of the Indian polity seems unassailable. Above all, however, what made Savarkar being called as '*swatantraveer*' was his portrayal of the revolt of 1857 as India's first war of independence, displaying exemplary courage in standing up to the host of colonial as well as native historians and commentators who had been bent upon denigrating the event as Sepoy Mutiny. Thus, Savarkar's nationalist interpretation of the Revolt of 1857 has offered a new perspective on analysing the landmark event of the Indian national movement.

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SOCIAL THOUGHTS OF SAVARKAR

In Savarkar's conceptualisation of Hindutva and *Hindu rashtra*, his social ideas become quite critical as they provide a blueprint for suitable transformations in the Indian society. Savarkar was a believer in the idea of social change and argued that a dynamic society needed to keep on changing in accordance with the imperatives of the time. However, in perceiving the idea of social change, he was highly impressed by the philosophical traditions of European thinkers, from which he borrowed the three significant characteristics of human life (Chousalkar 2004: 91):

1. In nature and in all human societies, the principle of life struggle determined the course of action because in this life struggle, the fittest survived and those who could not stand the struggle got eliminated.
2. Violence was in-built in the creation of nature and nature abhorred absolute non-violence. But due to gradual development of human beings, both violence and non-violence got intertwined. Hence, in this difficult life, man should acquire strength and power to overcome the problems he faced.
3. There was no absolute morality in the world. Morality or immorality of a particular action was ultimately determined by the factors such as time, space and object. The use of all weapons was desirable provided it was directed against slavery and imperialism. Thus, it was relativistic ethics.

Applying these principles of European philosophy in the Indian circumstance, Savarkar emphasised the constant struggle one had to face in one's life. He, therefore, argued for a dynamic conceptualisation of social change, whereby one needed to ensure one's survival in society and observe the values and norms of social conduct in relative perspectives of time, space and object.

Savarkar was a votary of social reform in the Indian society to get rid of obscurantist and evil social practices on the one hand, and imbibe the virtues of modern science and reason, on the other. Criticising the hold of caste system on the Hindu society, he repudiated the *Chaturvarnya* system as the root cause of the

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caste system which had given birth to such inhuman practices like untouchability. He, therefore, argued that if Hindus are to usher into the era of the glorious past, they must give up inhibitive systems such as caste and imbibe the virtues of rationalism and scientific temper in the minds of the people. He even went to the extent of rejecting the final authority of the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures if they did not reflect the changing norms of life. He asked the people to be critical in their perception of things as prevailing since centuries and reform their socio-cultural systems in accordance with the critical perspective afforded by the development of science and rationality. Thus, social thoughts of Savarkar appeared quite contemporary and aimed at infusing a sense of critical and broader comprehension in the minds of the people. Above all, he wanted the Hindu society to get rid of its divisive and discriminatory customs and practices.

SAVARKAR'S VIEWS ON HINDUTVA

Hindutva, as a political philosophy, not only reflected the firm conviction of Savarkar in the veracity and practicability of the religious–cultural ethos of Hindus to be the infallible basis of conceptualising India as a *Hindu rashtra*, but also the response of a Hindu nationalist to the prevailing circumstances of the time.

> As a spokesman of the majority interests, V.D. Savarkar formulated an ideology which could demolish the claims of national parity made by the Muslims, negate the territorial concept of nationhood propagated by the Congress, blunt the edge of the demands made by the Depressed Classes and prevent further atomisation of the Hindu community. (Dixit 1986: 131)

Still, above all, it was an ideological construct to provide for the consolidation of Hindus in India (Suresh Sharma 1996: 190). It was, in fact, the full blown articulation of the subtle idea which was simmering in the mind of Savarkar since his childhood, given his apparent upbringing in the intellectual ambience where the cure to the ills of the Hindu society was construed to lie in the establishment of a *Hindu rashtra* in India.

Savarkar began his conceptualisation of the idea of Hindutva by seeking answer to the question as to what could be considered

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as Hindu. He tersely proclaims that a Hindu could be anyone who considered this land of *Bharatvarsha*, from the Indus to the Seas, as his Fatherland as well as his holyland, that would be the cradle land of his religion. Further he envisaged three fundamental bonds that would conjoin the Hindus as a common entity, namely, *rashtra* (territory), *jati* (race) and *samskriti* (culture). Thus, territorially, a Hindu is one who feels being attached to the geographical tract extending between the rivers Sindhu (Indus) and Brahmaputra, on the one hand, and from Himalayas to the Cape Comorin, on the other. This geographical specification, indeed, becomes identical to what has traditionally been considered to the land of India for centuries.

Racially, Savarkar (1989) considered a Hindu as the one 'whose first and discernible source could be traced to the Himalayan altitudes of the Vedic *Saptasindhu*.' Such a racial demarcation of the Hindu was seemingly not meant to claim any sort of superiority of Hindus in comparison to other races in the world but to distinguish them from others. Moreover, Savarkar pronounced that the trait of Hindutva encompassing the life of the inhabitants of this part of land would remain indelible, as the impulse of his Hindu blood would make him feel the pride of being a Hindu. As he writes,

> [A] Hindu believing in any theoretical or philosophical or social system, orthodox or heterodox, provided it is unquestionably indigenous and founded by a Hindu, may lose his sect but not his Hindutva—his Hinduness—because the most important and essential which determines it is the inheritance of the Hindu blood. Therefore, all those who love the land that stretches from Sindhu to Sindhu, from Indus to Seas, as their fatherland and consequently claim to inherit the blood of the race that has evolved, by incorporation and adaptation, from the ancient Saptasindhu, can be said to possess two of the most essential requisites of Hindutva. (ibid.: 90–91)

Culturally, Savarkar maintains that a Hindu must feel the pride and commonality of his cultural roots with the other people of Hindusthan. As he explains,

> Hindus are bound together not only by the tie of the love we bear to a common fatherland and by the common blood that courses through our veins and keeps our hearts throbbing and our affection warm, but also by the tie of the common homage we pay to our

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> great civilisation—our Hindu culture, which could not be better rendered than by the word Sanskriti, suggestive as it is of that language, Sanskrit, which has been the chosen means of expression and preservation of that culture, of all that was best and worth preserving in the history of our race. We are one because we are a nation, a race and own a common Sanskriti (civilisation). (Savarkar 1989: 91–92)

Savarkar, thus, provides for a complex criterion to ordain a distinct identity and character to the Hindus in the Indian society.

To forcefully articulate the political connotations of the notion of Hindutva as against the religious meaning of the term Hinduism, Savarkar emphasised the inherent differences between the two seemingly synonymous terms. Hinduism, to Savarkar (ibid.: 104):

> ... means the 'ism' of the Hindus: and as the word Hindu has been derived from the word Sindhu, the Indus, meaning primarily all those who reside in the land that extends from Sindhu to Sindhu, Hinduism must necessarily mean the religion or the religions that are peculiar and native to this land and to these people.

However, a mischievous parochial construction of the idea of Hinduism confines it as the religion of the majority people, leaving aside a vast number of people outside the fold of Hindu religion.

> ...and thus we find that while millions of our Sikhs, Jains, Lingayats, several Samajis and others would deeply resent to be told that they—whose fathers' fathers up to the tenth generation had the blood of Hindus in their veins—had suddenly ceased to be Hindu! (ibid.: 106)

But Savarkar points out that they, indeed, are the part and parcel of Hinduism, as they, despite following numerous shades and schools, consider this land of Hindus as their fatherland and holyland. 'So to every Hindu from the Santal to the Sadhu, this Bharat bhumi, this Sindhusthan is at once a *pitribhu* and a *punyabhu*—fatherland and a holy land' (ibid.: 104). Applying this canon, therefore, Savarkar asserts that the converts to Christianity and Islam could not be considered as Hindus despite sharing common culture and lifestyle due to the fact that though they regard Hindusthan as their fatherland, they do not regard it as their holy land.

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By delineating the twin criteria of who could be a Hindu and who could not be so, Savarkar appeared to be advancing his interrelated agenda of bringing about a broad-based Hindu *sangathan* on the one hand, and preclude the believers in the other religions from such a *sangathan*, on the other. He, therefore, was categorical in pointing out the identicalness between the notions of Hindutva and Indianness. As he declared,

> [A] Hindu patriot worth the name cannot but be an Indian patriot as well. To the Hindus, Hindustan being fatherland and holy land, the love they bear to Hindustan is boundless. What is called nationalism can be defined as in fact the national communalism of the majority community.... Thus, in Hindustan it is the Hindus, professing Hindu religion and being in the overwhelming majority, that constitutes the national community and create and formulate the nationalism of the nation. (quoted in Dixit 1986: 132–33)

In substance, the ideology of Hindutva, as propounded by Savarkar was, rooted in the vision of Hindu solidarity. It was, in fact, a political construct whose antecedents lay in the cultural ethos of the Hindus. He maintained that despite having numerous external differentiations, internally, Hindus are bound together by certain distinct cultural, historical, religious, social and linguistic commonalities which have been brought about by centuries of assimilation and association with each other. To Savarkar, in the making of the *Hindu rashtra*, what counted more than anything else was the cultural, racial and religious unity of the people. In his perception, a nation would have been a political formation having people living in a contiguous and adequate landscape with a common national identity, marked by the internal cohesion brought about by subtle cultural and racial affinities. As the Hindus consisted of all these characteristics, they undoubtedly constituted a nation in the nature of a *Hindu rashtra*.

In such a *Hindu rashtra*, Savarkar offered the minorities some degree of freedom and right to participation in the affairs of the state provided they accept a position of non-aggression to the interests and rights of Hindus. As he clarifies,

> ...we shall ever guarantee protection to the religion, culture and language of the minorities for themselves, but we shall no longer tolerate any aggression on their part on the equal liberty of the

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> Hindus to guard their religion, culture and language as well. If non-Hindu minorities are to be protected, then surely the Hindu majority also must be protected against any aggressive minority in India. (Savarkar 1992: 46)

He, therefore, opposed the demand of Muslims for the grant of separate electorate in India. He claimed that being bestowed with such preferential treatment, Muslims would probably be handed down the right of:

> ... exercising the political veto on the legitimate rights and privileges of the majority and call it *Swarajya.* The Hindus do not want a change of masters, are not going to … fight and die only to replace an Edward by an Aurangzeb simply because the latter happens to be born within the Indian borders, but they want henceforth to be masters themselves in their own house, in their own land. (ibid.: 41)

Thus, on the question of minority rights, the approach of Savarkar was in consonance with his broad conceptualisation of the philosophy of Hindutva.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The life and thoughts of Savarkar have drawn criticism from a number of quarters. He has been branded for providing the intellectual input for the present day right wing extremism in the country. As a trenchant critic of Savarkar bemoans,

> Savarkar politicised religion and introduced religious metaphors into politics. He pioneered an extreme, uncompromising and rhetorical form of Hindu nationalism in Indian political discourse. His life exhibited an unwavering pursuit of a single ideal: to establish India as a Hindu nation. Even today, Savarkar remains the first, and most original, prophet of extremism in India. (Jyotirmaya Sharma 2003: 124)

He has also been charged as being an ideologue whose theoretical constructs failed to cut much ice with the people in the country. 'Savarkar's ideology failed to realise its political goal because it lacked the strength that comes from the mass support. His

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unidimensional approach to politics—protection of Hindu interests against Muslim encroachment—had no relevance for the Hindu masses' (Dixit 1986: 135).

Notwithstanding the attacks on the thoughts of Savarkar from both theoretical as well as practical perspective, the fact cannot be denied that his intellectual explorations have gone to enrich and give newer dimensions to the body of political thought in India. His theorisation on the notion of Hindutva might appear to be against the spirit and ethos of the composite culture which has been the hallmark of the Indian civilisation for many centuries, it undoubtedly reflected the perspective of certain sections of the society in a particular context and time. Moreover, his refreshing and creative interpretation of the revolt of 1857 as India's first war of independence propels him in the galaxy of such stalwarts of Indian nationalism whose intellectual and functional contribution to the cause of Indian nationalism can never be obliterated.

NOTES

1. An illustrative exposition of the basic tenets of Hinduism may be found in Radhakrishnan (1954).
2. The most authoritative and original articulation of the notion of Hindutva is considered to be Savarkar (1989).
3. For an extremely critical analysis of the rise and growth of the ideology of Hindutva, see Jyotirmaya Sharma (2003).
4. For a comprehensive and impartial analysis of the life and thoughts of Savarkar, see Keer (1998).
5. The presidential addresses which Savarkar delivered in the annual sessions of the Hindu Mahasabha were later published as Savarkar (1992).

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13 Pandita Ramabai

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the role of Ramabai as the pioneer of feminist thought and action in India.
- To explore the aspects of feminist thought of Ramabai.
- To elucidate the institutional pursuits by Ramabai for women's emancipation.

In the realm of Indian political thought, Pandita Ramabai seems to be the only female personality whose ideas and practices on ameliorating the conditions of women in India place her in league with other socially awakened thinkers of the country. For instance, like Jyotirao Phule, for whom the cause of Dalits became his mission for life, Ramabai remained engrossed with the cause of the women's emancipation throughout her life. The efforts for the amelioration of the conditions of women in India have, no doubt, been made by a number of social reformers. But what was unique in the case of Ramabai was her personal resoluteness to not only preach and act for the emancipation of women but also to become an example for other women by herself doing first what she preached. Hence, the life and works of Ramabai reflect an uncharacteristic crusade of a brilliant woman to break the barriers of women's emancipation at a time when even not many men of high calibre and social-consciousness could think of doing so.[1]

A LIFE IN PILGRIMAGE FOR THE CAUSE OF WOMEN

Given the pace of her life seemingly being ahead of her times, Pandita Ramabai appeared bound to live a life of perpetual struggle. Her birth in the home of a very progressive Brahman Anant Shashtri Dongre in 1858 ensured that Ramabai was saved from the twin curses of lack of education and child marriage.[2] However, the adverse material conditions of her family resulted in the death of her parents and her sister. Eventually, Ramabai, along with her brother, moved to Calcutta in 1878, which proved to be a turning point in her life. Here, she was not only conferred with the titles of 'Pandita'

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and 'Saraswati' in recognition of her intellectual attainments, but was also introduced into the realm of social reforms pioneered by the Brahmo Samaj, with the focus on the emancipation of women. Soon, the death of her brother in 1880 presumably forced her to marry a non-Brahman lawyer Bipin Behari Das Medhavi. Having become mother of a daughter, she lost her husband in less than two years time. Subsequently, she moved to Pune in 1882 to set up the Arya Mahila Samaj to work for the cause of women. Yet, her quest for knowledge led her to visit England where under circumstantial difficulties, she converted to Christianity.[3] After staying for about three years in England, she went to the United States of America (USA) in 1886. Her sojourn in the USA helped her concretise her plans for opening a home for high caste Hindu widows in India by raising funds under the aegis of The Ramabai Association of Boston. In the end, she returned to India in 1889 and remained busy with activities aimed at fostering the cause of women till her death in 1922. For her social reform activities, she was conferred with the *Kaiser-e-Hind* gold medal in 1919 by the British government.

ASPECTS OF FEMINIST THOUGHTS OF RAMABAI

The roots of feminist consciousness in Ramabai may be traced to her superior perceptive intellectual faculties on the one hand and her felt experiences of the real plight of the high caste women in India, on the other. Undoubtedly, her liberal and awakened parents ensured that she 'managed to escape a rigid gender-specific role, unlike her peers who were locked into wifehood and motherhood at an early age, confined to the domestic sphere, subjected to the pressures of the extended family, and denied education or even literacy' (Kosambi 2000: 5). Yet, she was well aware of the numerous disabilities and discriminations being faced by women in the face of patriarchal privileges of men. Crucially, her exposure to the less rigid and asymmetrical gender relations in the western societies further sharpened her perception of gender discriminations in India. Her conversion to Christianity was probably led by the impulse of a revolt against the inscrutable gender-specific social evils of Hinduism. Combined together, these aspects of her life made Ramabai an indomitable activist–theorist bent upon highlighting

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and ameliorating the pathetic conditions of the women in the Indian society (Chakravarty 1998: 7).

Essentially, the thrust of the feminist ideas of Ramabai was to discern and eradicate the structural inequalities and circumstantial disabilities of women. As such, a predicament was most authoritatively symbolised by none other than the high caste Hindu widows, who turned out to be the test case for feminism of Ramabai. She, therefore, argued for rescuing them from their insignificant status within the domestic sphere and restore them their public sphere through empowerment techniques such as education, training and skill development. Strategically, she called for a frank exchange of opinions on the issues of women's plight in order to arouse public opinion on such issues on the one hand, and to bring the reality in the face of the social reformers, on the other. The theoretical base of her feminism lied in providing an objective critique of the Hindu social and religious order to unravel its overtly patriarchal nature leading to multifarious disabilities and all round marginalisation of the women. To her, the logical conclusion of such a perceptible analysis of the gendered nature of the Hindu society and religion could be to evolve concrete policies and programmes for emancipating the women and ensuring the equality of status for them (Kosambi 1998: 47).

INSTITUTIONAL PURSUITS FOR WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

Pandita Ramabai's distinction as the pioneer of feminism in India is equally substantiated by her institutional pursuits for the emancipation of women. Even before she could fully articulate her views on the status of women in India, she had set up the Arya Mahila Samaj in 1882 in Pune to mobilise and unite women to seek social reforms. But with a veiled opposition to this by people like Tilak as well as her own voyage to foreign countries did not allow this organisation to become the epicentre of women's movement. However, the zeal of Ramabai for women's emancipation not only remained intact during her overseas stays, she looked for arranging logistical support to make such an enterprise more effective and

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autonomous.[4] Resultantly, the initiatives such as The Ramabai Association of Boston produced handsome financial support for the schemes of Ramabai to be launched in India.

Immediately after her return to India, she set up the *Sharada Sadan* (Home of Learning) to provide shelter to the widows of high caste Hindus at Mumbai. However, in order to gain more direct access to the orthodox Brahman families when she shifted the *Sadan* to Pune, she came under severe attack of the conservative elements of the Hindu society like Tilak, for motive of covert proselytisation. Consequently, high caste Hindu widows started distancing themselves from the *Sadan*, forcing Ramabai to increasingly alienate her from the Hindu society and exposing her bonds with Christianity.[5] This led her to open a new Christian body, the *Mukti Sadan*, to house the victims of the Gujarat famine of 1896. With the native support dwindling progressively, now she depended almost exclusively on the overseas donations to run her *Sadans* which were eventually amalgamated into an overtly missionary body called the Christian Mukti Missions. Quite evidently, this created an unbridgeable gap between Ramabai and the high caste Hindu community of Bombay Presidency.

Significantly, the institutional intervention of Pandita Ramabai in ameliorating the conditions of women demonstrated the perceived duality of her activities. The Christian Mukti Mission (later renamed as 'Ramabai Mukti Mission' and subsequently 'Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission'), no doubt turned out to be the women bastion, where numerous activities of women's empowerment were carried out. Moreover, the structures and ambience of the Mission were so autonomous and inspiring to women that it was sometimes called as 'a female Kingdom'. However, the unreasonable conversion of the *Sharada Sadan* into a Christian missionary organisation presumably defeated the primary purpose of Ramabai to provide for an emancipatory home for the high caste Hindu widows as they were the most mar-ginalised women in the country.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The views and actions of Pandita Ramabai may truly be attributed with laying the foundations of the feminist movement in India. Showing the colours of a true revolutionary from her childhood, Ramabai's entire life represented an unending pilgrimage of a

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visionary for the cause of women's emancipation. However, the circumstantial upheavals of life forced her to tread such paths which would not have been her preferred course, given the contemporary circumstances in which she rose to prominence. For instance, though Ramabai's initial and favourite objective was to expose the structural inequalities and functional marginalisation of the high caste Hindu widows, this cause was absolutely lost, probably due to her infatuation with Christian missionary activities in the later part of her life. Nonetheless, her sincere effort in making women aware of their socio-political role in contemporary society paid-off in due course. For instance, what she sought to accomplish with the formation of the Christian Mukti Mission at a time when there was hardly an effective voice against the well-entrenched patriarchy, was carried forward in independent India with the creation of 'All Women Police Station' or 'Self-Employed Women's Association' (SEWA). Given the hegemonic influence of primordial social values opposed to gender-equality, Ramabai's radical departure from the conventional thinking may not have gained prominence; nonetheless, her pursuits remain most critical in the articulation of a feminist perspective in the nationalist discourse. In this sense, she remains the precursor of new wave of thinking in post-colonial India championing gender-sensitive issues and concerns.

NOTES

1. For a lucid account of the life and works of Pandita Ramabai, see Sengupta (1970).
2. Many of such interesting stories have been narrated by Ramabai herself in her *The High-Caste Hindu Women* (2007).
3. Pandita Ramabai's initial brush with Christianity was eloquently articulated in her numerous letters written to friends; see Geraldine (1977).
4. For a succinct account of her sojourn in the United States, see Dyer (2004).
5. For a frank and vivid account of the views of Pandita Ramabai on her fondness for Christianity, see Ramabai (1992).

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Part II

Context and Contextual Influences Re-examined

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Methodologically underlining the marked departure from the conventional writings on the subject, this section of the book seeks to comprehensively unravel the context in which the texts were articulated. As has been emphasised earlier, the peculiar unfolding of Indian political thought as an antidote to colonialism and colonial power is attributed to the dialectics between texts and context. This is probably due to the fact that major trends in the Indian political thought evolved in a context which epitomised both indigenous and exogenous influences. The changing nature of the context is reflected in the text. It is not, therefore, surprising that revolutionary terrorism that critically influenced the Indian nationalist movement at the outset almost faded away with the expansion of the nationalist constituencies in the twentieth century following the emergence of Gandhi on the political scene and the universal acceptance of non-violence as perhaps the most effective ideological tool to meaningfully mobilise the masses in the freedom struggle. Indian political thought is, in this sense, neither 'static', representing stereotypes, nor derivative of 'the modular forms', though an indelible imprint of the western Enlightenment is too visible to escape notice.

What follows, therefore, is a selective yet systematic articulation of the various dimensions of the contexts that provided the foundational persuasions to the construction of the political thought in India. Given the highly variegated dimensions of the context, it has been analysed in four distinct compartments. First, the study of the nature and processes of Indian national movement provides the matrix in which the mighty and brutal colonialism was taken on by different people differently in the country. This, naturally, gave birth to diverse strands of political thought in India such as moderates, extremists, liberals and militants. Second, exposing the liberal though exploitative nature of the colonial rule, the numerous constitutional reforms measures introduced by the British apparently determined the ideological perspectives of the Indians to a large extent. They, undoubtedly, created a legalistic bent of mind in a majority of the Indian thinkers who ensured that their thought

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and actions need not cross the legitimate and constitutional limits set by law. Third, a highly commendable subaltern perspective in the contextualisation of the Indian political thought was provided by the numerous socio-economic movements initiated in the pre-independence times. The formidability of these movements arguably ensured that the voice of the marginalised, oppressed and peripheral elements of Indian society also get articulated in a substantive manner. The section ends with a dispassionate analysis of the despair and hope that marked the attainment of independence for India, with unmistakable pointers for the future Indian polity. In sum, this section, therefore, broadens the horizons of a minute understanding of the Indian political thought.

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14 Nature and Processes of Indian Freedom Struggle

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain the nature and processes of Indian freedom struggle with reference to the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement.
- To assess the role of the Indian National Army and the Axis Powers.
- To elucidate the significance of Indian Naval Uprising.

The nature and processes of the Indian national movement were extremely complex. For instance, there was a time in the national movement when its pioneers did not seem inclined toward seeking complete withdrawal of the British from India. Instead, they confined the sphere of the national movement to only seeking marginal concessions in certain domains of Indian administration. However, with the partition of Bengal acting as a catalyst, the first decade of the twentieth century saw the radicalisation of the national movement with the demand for *swaraj* ringing loudly in the air. But the real turnaround in the nature and processes of the Indian national movement came with Mahatma Gandhi taking up the leadership of the movement in the closing years of the 1910s. Now, the inspiration and reach of the movement no longer remained restricted to intellectual explorations and ground level activities of the political leader. It, in fact, moved out to the disgusting felt experiences of the masses—vis-à-vis the British rule—who were instigated by Gandhi to become the backbone of a series of massive and seemingly non-violent movements launched by him. Nonetheless, while the numerous Gandhi-led mass movements became the mainstay of the nationalist movement in the country, a few other exemplary and courageous movements was also in action as part of the national movement that were neither essentially non-violent nor sought any sort of integration with the mainstream nationalist movement of the times. Thus, the complexity of the nature and processes of the nationalist movement becomes obvious, looking at the various seemingly ideologically and strategically antagonistic movements going on in various parts of the country with the common objective of driving the British out of India. An attempt, hence, is made in this chapter to demonstrate the distinct aspects of the nature and processes of the nationalist

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movement in India by analysing not only the prominent movements launched under the Gandhian leadership, but also the seemingly peripheral but in reality quite formidable movements in the form of the Indian National Army (INA) and the Indian Naval Uprising.

THE REVOLT OF 1857

The open rebellion of Indian soldiers against the British in 1857 is considered as an epochal event in the history of modern India. Taking it as a precursor to the national movement to liberate the country from the yoke of British colonialism, this unprecedented event may be perceived as an articulation of the dissatisfaction of Indians with the nature and conduct of the British rule in India for almost 100 years preceding the event. Indeed, the initiation of the mammoth national movement in the country is generally attributed to this heroic event, despite the colonial interpretation of the event as nothing more than a sepoy mutiny. '[T]he Revolt of 1857', explains an authority on modern India, 'was much more than a mere product of sepoy discontent. It was in reality a product of the character and policies of colonial rule, of the accumulated grievances of the people against the Company's administration and of their dislike for the foreign regime' (Chandra 2009: 140).

Given the intensity and scale of this pioneering event, it was obvious that a lot of debate was generated amongst scholars on the nature and objectives of the revolt. Interestingly, what is perplexing about the debate is probably the overall perspective of the commentators regarding the whole lot of issues and contexts of the colonial rule in India and the Indian freedom struggle. In other words, scholars who saw some sort of merit in the colonial rule and, therefore, were favourably disposed towards the British rule in India, took somewhat parochial and insinuating view of the event. On the other hand, commentators who perceived the colonial rule in India without any merit and nothing more than a naked brandishing of imperialism, called it India's first war of independence. In between these two apparently categorical positions, a few scholars argue for the interpretation of the revolt of 1857 as neither just a sepoy mutiny nor a formidable war of independence in India. What they seek to project is that it was a spontaneous manifestation of the long held grievances of Indians against the unjust

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and exploitative colonial rule in India. These scholars, therefore, appear to be more in congruity with the opinion that the revolt of 1857 was India's first war of independence, though lacking a nationalist perspective and a well-thought out plan of action to achieve the desired objectives.

The earliest interpretations of the revolt of 1857 were typically colonial, as it manifested the fragmented view of the Indian realities. It tried to explain the revolt as the handiwork of a few disgruntled and dispossessed erstwhile Muslim rulers. Instead of attributing any loftier objective to the mutiny, it argued that rogue Muslim rulers wished to restore the erstwhile majestic rule of Mughals in India, so that they could regain their lost prestige and position in the Indian society. However, such a motivated interpretation of an unprecedented event could not last long owing to the lack of material evidence for the same.

A more refined interpretation, therefore, was advanced to present the struggle as a sepoy mutiny. It was argued that the sepoys mutinied precisely due to the problems confined to the domains of the army. Hence, there could not have been any sort of deliberate mass participation in such a sepoy mutiny, as there was nothing which the masses could have identified themselves with. Whatsoever civil participation in the mutiny was noticed, it was sought to be reasoned out as a mischievous attempt on the part of the trouble-makers to take undue advantage of a propitious circumstance. In other words, the argument goes that the revolt of 1857 was an insurrection clandestinely planned and executed by a band of disgruntled soldiers. It was taken advantage of by miscreants amongst the civilians once the law and order was no more in place. Hence, the making of a common cause by the civilians with the mutinying soldiers was the product of a sinister exploitation of a volatile situation which could not be termed as a mass rising against the colonial rule in India. In post-independence times, such a view was reiterated by historians like S.N. Sen (1957) which was also shared by the scholars such as R.C. Majumdar (1963). But with newer researches and evidences being unearthed, such a restrictive interpretation of the revolt of 1857 has been progressively losing its validity in the historiography of the modern India.

In a total negation of the view that the offensive of the 1857 was just a sepoy mutiny, a number of commentators, both from within and outside of India, have categorically evaluated the events of

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the time as India's first war of independence. Ideologically, what is more heartening is the fact that such a conclusion was drawn by different people across the political spectrum. The most conspicuous interpretation of this school was afforded, among others, by Karl Marx when, in his articles published in *The New York Daily Tribune*, he unhesitatingly construed the struggle of Indians during 1857 as the first Indian war of independence (see Marx and Engels 1959).

Amongst the Indian commentators, the first to identify the revolt of 1857 as India's first war of independence was V.D. Savarkar (1949). In his unconventional analysis of the issues, contexts and circumstances leading to the amazing resistance raised by the Indian soldiers to the British rule in India, Savarkar reached the conclusion that the events of 1857 were indeed a war of independence for Indians. Despite being an innovative interpretation of the events of 1857, the arguments of Savarkar could not gain acceptability amongst the mainstream leftist historians of the country. Significantly, though the line of argument of Savarkar was in tandem with the line of argument offered by Marx long back, the Marxist historians in India could not subscribe his views presumably due to his strident views on Hindutva. Eventually, the categorisation of the events of 1857 as India's first war of independence gained considerable academic appreciation when historians such as S.B. Chaudhury (1957: 297) openly conceptualised the revolt as 'the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge a foreign power. This is a real, if remote, approach to the freedom movement of India of a later age.'

In recent times, the historiography of the revolt of 1857 has revolved around the pursuit of evolving a consensual approach to the historical event. In this venture, while scholars avoid terming the revolt as part of the national movement, they, nevertheless, attribute to it the dignity of the struggle 'to recover what they (the mutineers) believed to have been their ancestral domains' (Guha 1994: 318). However, such domains have been shown to be going beyond the parochial self-interests of different groups of people. Sinking their perceived differences for the sake of freeing Hindustan of the colonial rule, these people were now sure of the composite living space of India, where Hindus and Muslims could live side by side (Ray 1993: 133–35). Such a pervading sense of joint struggle against the common enemy of British colonialism could not

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have been possible unless the people were moved by the objective of uprooting the foreign rule from the country. It would, therefore, not be wrong to argue that the revolt of 1857 was indeed the first war of independence for Indians.

THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT (1919–22), CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT (1930–32) AND QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT (1942)

Gandhi's arrival on the political scene radically altered the complexion of the anti-British struggle in India in three significant ways: first, the nationalist movement which was so far confined to mainly to the metropolitan cities of India got fresh impetus with the involvement of peasants and workers; second, with his amazing success in South Africa, Gandhi had already created a space for non-violence as critical to movements against atrocities in the name of political liberalism of the western variety; and third, by involving the peripheral sections of society, Gandhi also articulated an ideology that drew not only on anti-British sentiments, but also on socio-economic grievances of the masses. In a nutshell, Gandhi evolved a refreshingly new political programme that while challenging the colonial regime, gave voice to the voiceless. That Gandhi was different from his erstwhile nationalist colleagues was evident when he launched *satyagraha* in remote areas of Champaran (in Bihar), Kheda and Ahmedabad (in Gujarat), instead of the presidency towns, then the hub of nationalist activities. His political strategies brought about dramatic changes in the Congress party which expanded its sphere of influence even in the villages. As J.B. Kripalani (1970: 61), one of Gandhi's trusted lieutenants during the freedom struggle admitted,

> ...in those days, such was our nationalism that we did not know what was really happening in the villages. We, the educated, lived more or less an isolated life. Our world was confined to the cities and to our fraternity of the educated. Our contact with the masses was confined to our servants and yet we talked of the masses and were anxious to free the country from foreign yoke.

Gandhi led three major pan-Indian movements. The 1920–22 Non-Cooperation Movement was the first one that gained significantly

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with its merger with the Khilafat agitation of Muslims against the dismantling of the Khalif in Turkey. The Civil Disobedience Movement was an all-India campaign in which Gandhi remained supreme. Basically a salt *satyagraha*, the Civil Disobedience Movement manifested differently in different parts of India. The 1942 Quit India Movement, also known as an open rebellion, was the last of the three pan-Indian campaigns, spearheaded by Gandhi. Like the earlier anti-British nationalist offensives, the Quit India Movement was not uniform in its nature throughout the country and yet the masses drew on Gandhi and his ideas while zealously participating in what was proclaimed to be the final battle for independence. Keeping in view the complexities of the Gandhi-led all-India anti-British movement, the chapter dwells on each of these movements separately to grasp the changing nature of Indian nationalism with the growing participation of the marginalised sections of society in the struggle for freedom.

The Non-Cooperation Movement, 1919–22

The Non-Cooperation Movement is certainly a break with the past. Gandhi's arrival on the political scene introduced various new dimensions to the nationalist politics. India's freedom struggle was no longer confined to the *bhadralok* only; it also incorporated new social groups which had so far remained peripheral. Concomitant to the extension of the constituency of nationalist politics was the adoption of new slogans which radicalised the Congress to a large extent. Not content with the so-called mendicant politics, the Gandhi-led Congress undertook several measures which created new constituencies of support. Gandhi rose to prominence at a time when both the moderate and extremist methods were proved to be futile, given the incessant attempts of the people at the grass roots to challenge the colonial state which allowed vested interests to grow and thrive. So, involvement of new social groups in the freedom struggle helped crystallise their search for a new order. Not always significant, these forces undoubtedly articulated new socio-political and economic issues which never figured in the pre-1921 Congress agenda, presumably because of its narrow social base. So, a complex interplay of factors involving the state, the Congress and the mass drive for changing the prevalent socio-economic

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and political order led to the Non-Cooperation Movement which, though essentially an anti-British offensive, laid the foundation of altogether new movements challenging both vested interests and the alien state.

Organisationally, the Congress, no longer confined merely to the elites, soon developed into a national movement with agricultural links extending far into the country and its support coming from wide sections of the population. An important reason as to why the Congress became a mass organisation probably lay in an effective merger of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat causes. Recognising Muslims as a separate political group in the 1916 Lucknow Pact, the Congress adopted perhaps the most meaningful strategy to build a mass movement by bringing Hindus and Muslims together. 'The adoption of non-cooperation for the sake of the Khilafat was' as Gandhi (1995: 418) argued, 'itself a great practical attempt made by the Congress to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity.' It is, however, debatable whether only the Khilafat cause, which was not at all directly related to India's freedom struggle, cemented the bond between Hindus and Muslims in the wake of the Non-Cooperation Movement, though the disintegration of the Caliphs was too remote to have an impact on ordinary Muslims. Whatever the factors that contributed to the expansion of the Congress, the rise of its membership was spectacular, as shown in Table 14.1:

Table 14.1 Increase of Congress Membership, 1918–22

Year	*Total number of delegates*	*Muslims*	*Per cent of muslims vis-à-vis the total*
1918	4,868	205	4.0
1919	8,126	314	4.5
1920	14,582	1,050	7.2
1921	4,729	–	–
1922	3,248	111	3.6

Source: Krishna (1966: 421).

Although the Table is by no means exhaustive, it draws our attention to the gradual increase and decrease of the Congress delegates during and after the Non-Cooperation campaign. One is, thus, inclined to underline the importance—primarily of religious content—of the Khilafat in political mobilisation during the Non-Cooperation Movement, given the sudden increase of Muslim

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delegates and their indifference later. Notwithstanding the adverse consequences of articulating Muslim demands as separate from those of the Indian National Congress (INC) in later days, Gandhi's decision to champion the Khilafat cause broadened the social base of the nationalist movement. Attributing exploitation at different levels to the alien state, the Congress leadership succeeded in infusing popular misery with a political content. It is not, therefore, surprising that different kinds of political movements were organised during the Non-Cooperation days which, though drew upon anti-British feelings, were basically attacks on well-entrenched vested interests. As will be shown below, the Non-Cooperation call let loose hitherto unknown socio-economic and political forces that decisively shaped and thus consequently made the nature of the nationalist intervention more complex than ever.

Apart from including boycott of schools, colleges and law courts, the Non-Cooperation campaign adopted a more militant stance on boycott of foreign clothes (including public bonfires) and boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales in November 1921. Since the 1920 Calcutta Congress, delegates were reported to have insisted on non-payment of taxes which rattled the administration because such an issue was likely to gain an easy acceptance. Furthermore, it caused concern to the colonial state since the issues was championed by the Bengal contingent comprising principally 'the ex-detenus and the intelligentsia which have ... at their disposal many thousands of men who are available for propaganda amongst the masses of the most unscrupulous, reckless and dangerous character' (O'Donnell 1921). Despite Gandhi's reluctance, boycott was included in the Congress agenda in the Bombay All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting of 28–30 July primarily to accommodate the radical elements within the Congress. As Bhattacharya has shown, the economic boycott, though complementary to economic *swadeshi*, actually enhanced the profit of the Indian textile magnates. Before the war, Indian mill-owners, for instance, controlled only 25 per cent of the textile market which expanded to 42 per cent by the end of 1921; the prices also rose by three times (Bhattacharya 1977).

As regards the boycott of schools and colleges, the Non-Cooperation campaign probably attained a dramatic success. Gandhi was convinced that English education was futile and urged students to leave the government-controlled educational institutions. The appeal had an electrifying impact in the context of

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opening of a large number of national schools and colleges throughout the country. As Table 14.2 shows, though the popularity was not the same, the national schools and colleges attracted a large number of students:

Table 14.2

Province	*Institutions*	*Number of scholars*
Madras	92	5,072
Bombay	189	17,100
Bengal	190	14,819
United Province	137	8,476
Punjab	69	8,046
Bihar and Orissa	442	17,330
Central Provinces	86	6,338
Assam	38	1,908
NWFP*	04	120

Source: Bamford (1925: 104).
Note: *North Western Frontier Province.

It is true that the number of students enrolled in these schools and colleges was not large enough to cause anxiety. What alarmed the administration was the impact of the boycott slogan on government institutions as a whole; almost 80 per cent of them were seriously affected between 1919 and 1921. While explaining this, the official report admitted:

> There was something in the movement that appealed to most diverse types of minds.… Imagination has been fired and a spiritual uplift initiated. Something that had been wanting in our college life had been supplied.… The situation presented possibilities of romance and adventure that irradiated [otherwise sterile] student life. Picketing and procession were [therefore] as irresistible to such minds as a bump supper and a 'rag' to Oxford graduates.
>
> [Students] became for the first time conscious that they were wasting time over a kind of education not suited to their needs and leading them to an office stool. (Bamford 1925: 102–03)

National schools and colleges failed to provide an effective alternative to the prevalent academic institutions and, by 1923, except in Bengal,[1] the lack of interest in such an experiment was clearly evident.[2] The official explanation was also significant in

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having brought out the limitations of the existing system of education which was at best tuned to the creation of merely a pool of clerks.

Whatever the reasons, the educational boycott was more effective in contrast with other Non-Cooperation agenda. For instance, the initial appeal for self-sacrifice was hardly successful: only 24 titles were surrendered out of 5,186 and the number of lawyers giving up practice was just 180 in 1921. Polling was low in the 1920 Council election, falling to 8 per cent in Bombay city and 5 per cent in Lahore; candidates contested in all but six seats out of 637 and most disappointing was the fact that council functioning could not be disrupted. Compared with the erstwhile Congress campaign, the Non-Cooperation Movement demonstrated that 'the old closed shop of limited politics had been thrown open' (Brown 1972: 317). Far greater number than before were participating in an overt political campaign using a far wider range of techniques than earlier politicians had ever used simultaneously and participants came from all parts of India. The political nation was, thus, expanded to accommodate various kinds of interests, building on local grievances which, on various occasions, were attributed to colonialism. As a consequence, the nation had to confront with various new constituents that were either peripheral or too insignificant to deserve attention in political mobilisation.

An important dimension of the nationalist politics unfolded with the incorporation of the working class struggle in its fold. In 1921, there were 396 strikes involving 6,00,351 workers and loss of 69,94,426 man-days (Sarkar 1989: 208). What provoked strikes was the recession in the post-war period which forced the factory owners to cut production with a four-day week. The Bengal jute mill workers were hit hard by this new schedule of production which largely accounts for an epidemic of strike in 1921: a total of 137 strikes affecting 1,86,479 workers. The leadership was vested in the newly emerged section of the 'the Hindu right as well as a number of left groups dedicated to the creation of a socialist movement focused on the grievances of the workers and peasants' (Basu 1994: Chapter VI). Organising the workers in trade unions, these labour activists caused alarm to the British administration which by highlighting their *bhadralok* background strove assiduously to create a fissure between the workers and the leadership.[3] Apart from jute mill towns, the participants in the Non-Cooperation campaign

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tried to organise a strike in Raniganj–Jharia coal mines. Although both the leaders, Swami Viswanand and Swami Darsananand were involved in the movement against mine owners, especially to ameliorate the conditions of mine workers, the strike was reported to have been instigated by Marwari businessmen who wanted to get into coal business, so far monopolised by the Europeans (West Bengal State Archives [WBSA] 1921).

The Chandpur incident of 1921 is probably the most publicised event during the Non-Cooperation Movement showing the appeal of Gandhi as a leader who was acceptable to the Assam tea garden workers regardless of religion, caste and region. Inspired by Gandhi's call for *swaraj* for the people which meant an end to exploitation, tea garden workers in Chandpur, mostly from United Provinces (UP) and Bihar, started a long trek without seeking the manager's permission to leave the factory for home which brought them to Chandpur in Tippera district on 15 May 1921. Despite adverse consequences, the workers undertook such dramatic steps probably in response to the prevalent rumour that 'Gandhi raj has been established [and hence] the exploiters [garden owners] are on the run.'[4] In order to prevent the workers from boarding a steamer for their journey, the local administration employed Gurkha military police who resorted to indiscriminate firing. Such 'an inhuman act'[5] provoked mass resentment which was translated into steamer and rail strike in east Bengal. The C.R. Das-led Bengal Congress immediately took up the cause of the workers to sharpen its attack on the colonial state. The chain of strikes in Bengal that followed the Chandpur firing was partly attributable to the involvement of leading Congressmen like C.R. Das and J.M. Sengupta, and partly due to 'a spontaneous rising of the entire population especially the lower classes who expressed through the strike their acute sense of economic exploitation and racial abasement under white rule' (Ray 1984: 279). A disturbed Ronaldshay who appeared panic-stricken in view of the widespread nature of the strike wrote,

> ...the most disquieting feature is the extent of the hold which events have shown they have already acquired over large classes of people. They have been able to call strikes in the inland steamer lines and the Assam-Bengal Railway, and they have been able to call hartals in a number of east Bengal towns simultaneously.[6]

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The 'strike fever' (WBSA 1921), as it was characterised in the official discourse, was endemic and affected primarily the industries of eastern India. Part of the reason lay in the fact that the leadership succeeded in attributing worker's misery principally to the European/American ownership that, with its complicity with the colonial state, was naturally insensitive to the grievances of Indians. Besides, the role of the local Congress leadership appeared critical in organising the disparate workers for a cause by providing an ideological direction as well as material help. For leaders like C.R. Das and J.M. Sengupta, labour was increasingly becoming an important constituency of the nationalist politics, recognised later in the 1922 Gaya Congress; and thus by championing the workers' cause, they initiated a process which, though signalled and articulated various contradictions in the Gandhi-led movement, widened the social base of the freedom struggle. Because strike 'do not fall within the plan of non-violent non-cooperation' (Gandhi 1921a), Gandhi while condemning the strikes argued,

> ...in India, we want no political strikes ... we must gain control over the unruly and disturbing elements ... we seek not to destroy capital or capitalists, but to regulate the relations between capital and labour. We want to harness capital to our side. It would be folly to encourage sympathetic strikes. (1921b)[7]

The Non-Cooperation Movement also brought the peasants to the forefront of the nationalist struggle. By according priority to village reconstruction through self-help, Gandhi articulated his plan for an economic revival 'through spinning wheel and hand woven cloth [*charkha* and *khadi*], panchayats or arbitration courts, national schools and campaign for Hindu-Muslim unity and against liquor and untouchability' (Sarkar 1989: 209). Although these programmes may not have been uniformly effective as strategies for political mobilisation, they, nonetheless, unfolded a new process by involving the hitherto neglected sections of the society in a struggle which, despite its pronounced political content, was equally a battle against well-entrenched vested interests in the localities. It was not, therefore, surprising that the peasants of Kanika in Orissa challenged the local *zamindar*s for having demanded extra rent. Drawing upon Gandhi, the militant section of the Orissa Congress leaders organised 'the peasants for the establishment of Gandhi raj when no one would have to pay rent' (Pati 1993: 62–65); so convinced were the peasants that they 'boycotted

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and intimidated, on occasions, those who were inclined to pay rents to the zamindars' (Pati 1993: 65). The movement, though led by the Orissa Congress, did not receive Gandhi's approval, and was later unconditionally revoked. Gandhi, however, favoured a no-revenue campaign in a *rayatwari* settlement area like Bardoli and not in any *zamindari* region where it would inevitably involve 'no rent'. By trying to contain the 'no rent' campaign, Gandhi projected a specific type of leadership which mobilised peasants exclusively in its terms and conditions. Peasants were organised and mobilised on the so-called unifying issues which transcended even well-defined borders among the antagonistic classes. So, it was logical when Gandhi 'depreciated all attempts to create a discord between landlords and tenants and advised the tenants to suffer rather than fight for they had to join all forces for fighting the most powerful zamindar, namely, the government.'[8]

Gandhi's political agenda sharpened the division within the nationalist leadership which saw the peasant cause as integral to the anti-imperial struggle. For the Kisan Sabhas, 'no rent' was a logical demand in a vertically divided society, though it affected adversely the landlords who were Indians; so, the struggle of the peasantry took a different turn in areas where they were predominant. In the Congress dominated areas, the contradiction that reigned supreme was between imperialism and nationalism, and the local leadership, therefore, succeeded in integrating the movements in the localities with its pan-Indian counterpart on the basis of an opposition to imperialism. Despite surplus extraction, the contradiction between landlords and peasants never became sharp enough to cause a fissure in the multi-class platform which the leadership so carefully nurtured. Midnapur in Bengal was a glaring example of local Congress leadership effectively tuned to peasant movement to identify imperialism as singularly responsible for severe dislocation in society. Such a correlation gained ground in the peasant mind probably due, *inter alia*, to peculiar socio-economic and political configuration in this Bengal district.

The Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930–32

The Non-Cooperation Movement confirmed the popularity of the Congress party and Gandhi's rise as its undisputed leader. By suspending the movement following the Chauri Chaura incident,[9]

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the Congress Working Committee (CWC), at Gandhi's behest, instructed 'the local Congress committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government ..., [and also resolved] to withdraw from every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature.'[10] Yet, in seven years, the Congress changed its stance radically and demanded *purna swaraj* in the 1929 Lahore Congress, urging the nation for another civil disobedience.[11] Gandhi launched the movement by presenting before the Viceroy, his 11-point demands which are as follows:

> (1) total prohibition, (2) reduction of the rupee ratio to pound-sterling, (3) reduction of land revenue by at least fifty percent and making it subject to legislative control, (4) abolition of salt tax, (5) reduction of the military expenditure by at least fifty percent, (6) reduction of the salaries of the highest grade service to one half or less as to suit the reduced revenue, (7) imposition of protective tariff on foreign cloth, (8) passage of the Coastal Tariff Reservation Bill, (9) discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder; withdrawal of all political prosecution and abrogation of Section 124A Regulation III of 1818 and the like, and permission of all Indian exiles to return, (10) abolition of the CID or its popular control, (11) issue of licenses to use firearms for self-defence, subject to popular control. (Mitra 1930: 24)

Gandhi's 11-point ultimatum to the Viceroy, however, disappointed many leading Congressmen, including Jawaharlal Nehru, since the 11-point charter did not include a demand for change in the political structure, not even dominion status. 'Bewildered' at Gandhi's charter of demands which ultimately boiled down to a campaign for salt preparation, Nehru (1989: 210) thought that 'it was sad climb down from Purna Swaraj resolution.' Irwin, the Viceroy was not perturbed at all. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Wedgewood Benn, he wrote that 'at present the prospect of a salt campaign does not keep me awake at night.'[12] Although the 11-point demand seemed an anti-climax to many Congressmen, the CWC welcomed 'the proposal of Mahatma Gandhi', and authorised him and those working with him who believed in non-violence as an article of faith 'to start civil disobedience'. Endorsing the campaign for a mass civil dis-obedience, the Working Committee emphatically declared that,

> ...in the event of a mass movement taking place, all those who are rendering voluntary cooperation to the government such as lawyers,

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> and those who are receiving so-called benefits from it, such as students, will withdraw their cooperation or renounce benefits as the case may be, and throw themselves into the final struggle for the freedom. (All India Congress Committee [AICC] 1930)

Gandhi's 11-point agenda incorporated demands of almost every section of Indian society. By choosing salt as the central issue, he strove to organise an anti-British campaign in which the participation of a majority of the people was ensured since salt was essential for everyday survival. The boycott of foreign clothes was also included as a strategy because of its effectiveness in the earlier Congress campaign. Hence, the Civil Disobedience Movement revolved primarily around attacks on the government salt monopoly and the boycott of foreign clothes.

The salt *satyagraha* affected virtually every province, though in some areas, the campaign assumed massive proportions due to physical proximity with the sea. So, Bombay presidency bore the brunt of the salt campaign. Apart from harming British economic interests, the salt campaign contributed immensely to political mobilisation by generating an atmosphere of contempt for the government which deprived people of a basic necessity of life, namely, salt. By publicising the government retaliation against the non-violent salt campaign in the press, the Congress sustained the tempo of the movement to such an extent that the Governor General, not perturbed at all when the movement was launched, appeared panic-stricken and admitted that Gandhi 'planned a fine strategy round the issue of salt [because] salt had value for a broad mass appeal and emotive publicity.'[13]

Similarly, the boycott of foreign clothes was an effective nationwide campaign, organised by the Congress volunteers who perfected this method since the 1905 *swadeshi* movement. Its impact was devastating on British commercial interests and there was a sharp decline of British cloth import 'from 29 million pound-sterling in 1929 to 13.7 million pound-sterling in 1930, and quantity-wise, from 1,248 million yards in 1929–30 to 523 million yards in 1930–31' (Sarkar 1989: 203). It is true that the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s was responsible for a large scale dislocation in international trade and commerce, yet the economic *swadeshi* helped the Indian mill-owners significantly. Thus, in his presidential address to the Bombay mill-owners association, Homi Modi (1932) underlined the Congress contribution by admitting that 'the

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Swadeshi Movement … undoubtedly helped [the Indian] industry during a period of grave difficulty [and now] the future may be regarded as full of hope.' Apart from sustaining the industrial constituencies, the Civil Disobedience campaign was remarkable in having extended the Congress influence to women and children. A Home Department report shows that of the 29,054 prisoners on 15 November 1930, no less than 2,050 were below 17 while 369 were women (Haig 1930).

As a strategist, Gandhi succeeded in infusing popular misery with political content by attributing it to the oppressive nature of the Raj. Astonished by the immense popularity of the Civil Disobedience campaign, the moderate Tej Bahadur Sapru candidly admitted that,

> ...the Congress has undoubtedly acquired a great hold on popular imaginations. On the roadside stations where until a few months ago, I could hardly have suspected that people had any politics, I have seen with my eyes demonstrations and heard with ears the usual Congress slogans. The popular feeling is one of excitement. It is fed from day-to-day continuous and persistent propaganda on the part of the Congressmen—by lectures, delivered by their volunteers in running trains and similar activities … there is no doubt whatever in my mind that there is the most intense distrust of the Government and its professions. Indeed, I have little doubt in my mind that the racial feeling has been fanned to a very dangerous extent.... It seems to me that the Congress is really fighting for its own supremacy in the country.[14]

With a gradual expansion of its organisational network, the Congress certainly became stronger than before. For Gandhi, the violation of salt law was 'the last throw of a gambler', insisting that even 'the risk of violence was worth it.'[15] The movement appeared inevitable given the government intransigence to concede the most humane demand which was unfortunate, as Gandhi himself stated, because 'on bended knees, I asked for bread and received stones instead.'[16] Hence he repudiated the salt law and regarded it as his 'sacred duty to break the mournful mandatory compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the nation for want of free vent.'[17]

The Civil Disobedience campaign had galvanised the rural masses into action. Areas like Bordoli and Kheda in Gujarat, Bankura and Arambagh in Bengal, and Bihpur in Bihar came to prominence in the first phase of the movement. By resorting to

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rural constructive work through local ashrams, Gandhians sustained the nationalist spirit which had manifested itself in the form of salt *satyagraha* during the Civil Disobedience campaign. Salt provided 'the initial catalyst' in the struggle for *purna swaraj*. With the onset of monsoon and also the geographic constrain of its effectiveness as a strategy, the illegal manufacture of salt gradually lost its significance. Hence, the Congress volunteers adopted other techniques to continue with the anti-British campaign. In Midnapur in Bengal, for instance, despite enormous physical coercion and sale of property, the refusal to pay the *chowkidari* tax instantaneously mobilised the peasants against the state, clearly suggesting how local grievances sustained and also gave fillip to the Civil Disobedience movement. Moreover, as the Bengal Congress was organisationally weak, due *inter alia*, to factional rivalry among its leaders, the province experienced during the Civil Disobedience campaign a considerable diversity of forms of popular initiative at the grass roots upholding both Gandhian and revolutionary terrorist methods of mass mobilisation.

The Quit India Movement, 1942

Following the adoption of the 8 August 1942 resolution at Gowalia tank in Bombay, Indian masses undertook perhaps the most militant nationalist movement during the freedom struggle which is known as the Quit India Movement. It was a call for freedom. Nothing less than freedom, as Gandhi announced while articulating his thought on this anti-British counter-offensive. Unlike the 1920–22 Non-Cooperation and the 1930–32 Civil Disobedience Movements which were basically non-violent campaigns against the British rule in India, the Quit India Movement was an ultimatum to the British government for final withdrawal. The Quit India Movement was a Gandhi-led un-Gandhian campaign since the Mahatma exhorted to take up arms in self-defence and resort to armed resistance against a stronger and well-equipped aggressor.

Although the Quit India Movement was the culmination of the Gandhi-led nationalist campaign, the 8 August resolution launched a different political Movement which was a complete break with the past. The Quit India Movement was not merely another instance of the Civil Disobedience campaign, it was 'an open rebellion'. All

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the past *satyagraha* movements, writes the *Harijan*,[18] were protests against 'the unwanted or unapproved acts of the Raj', the authority of which was, however, conceded. Hence, the Congress:

> ... registered protests by breaking the salt law, forest regulations, the enforcement of Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code, curfew orders, executive ban on meetings etc., and [we] bowed our heads to lathis of the police ... and underwent sentences of imprisonment as model prisoners.[19]

The situation, however, changed soon as,

> [when] even the tacit recognition of the government by the people is consciously withdrawn, a government ceases to have any sanction and persons who attempt to exercise governmental authority are usurpers and no obedience is due to them and any punishment meted out having no sanction became the acts of ruffian.[20]

The AICC resolution of 8 August demanding, as Gandhi articulated, that 'the British authority should end completely irrespective of the wishes or demands of various parties'[21] is a significant departure from the earlier movements when the authority of the government had 'the political sanction to carry out the laws as they are'[22] and, hence, legitimate. With the onset of the Quit India Movement, the political equation between the government and Congress had undergone a radical change in the context of the Raj being identified as 'a usurper of authority and power.'[23] The Congress became more militant than ever by exhorting the people:

> ... to refuse to recognise government officials and we own no obedience to them. When a police man appears with a lathi or a revolver, he having no license to use such powers, has to be disarmed. We should not bow our heads to receiving the strokes as formerly but pull away their sticks and render them powerless. They have no authority to arrest us. Therefore the present day arrest and detention is on par with kidnapping. All our leaders have [therefore] been kidnapped.[24]

It was also unexpected for the British government which was hardly prepared for the rising tide of violence involving various sections of the people. As F.O. Bell, an Indian Civil Services (ICS) officer who served the Bengal government during the 1930–47 period, noted,

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> ...thus the struggle has been animated by violence and terrorism. There should be no surprise to those who preached it as an open rebellion who knew the sorry [*sic*] history of Mr Gandhi's previous experiments with ahimsa, who set the countryside alight with the slogan 'do or die', who pledged on the emotions of callous students, who commanded that when the law took its course and Congress committees ceased to function, every individual must be his own guide in the conflict and who sheltered with the party the revolutionaries and hooligans who are always ready to profit by anarchy.[25]

Despite the fear of a severe military clampdown on the participants, the movement acquired the characteristics of a rebellion with a strong organisational backing. Although the Congress was outlawed and its organisation was in disarray in most of the provinces, the call for an open rebellion brought disparate masses together with a single aim of overthrowing the British rule in India. How big was the Congress organisation in terms of membership on the eve of the August revolution? It is true that the drive for membership was not as effective as it was in the case of the earlier nation-wide campaigns, notably the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements, though the Congress High Command had always, in its circulars to the provincial Congress committees, insisted on expanding the organisational networks at the grass roots 'to popularise the Congress campaign and also the programme of *satyagraha*.' The effort did not yield results to the extent the Congress leadership expected, presumably because of the factional squabbles that plagued the provincial Congress committees to a considerable extent. The Quit India declaration was thus 'a cry of despair or a cry of the party in panic' (Kamtekar 1988: 25) given the dramatic decrease in membership from 4.5 million in 1938–39 to as low as 1.4 million in 1940–41. Although the dwindling membership was a cause of concern to the Congress, it hardly made an impact on the movement in view of the spontaneous mass uprising against the British rule. To the British administration, this input was useful to propagate the idea that the Congress popularity as a nationalist anti-British party was on the decline and, hence, the Congress had no moral right to speak for the country as a whole.

The Congress leadership was equally militant. While commenting on the nature of the forthcoming Congress-led movement following

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the adoption of the 8 August resolution, Jawaharlal Nehru was reported to have said,

> ...the Mahatma's new movement would impose no restrictions as has been the case in the previous movements of 1920 and 1930. Everyone would be free to use his own weapons according to his own choice. Revolutionaries could do as they please and also kisans and labour leaders. The Mahatma was not prepared to call-off the movement on account of the acts of such people.... If the people took over government buildings, courts, police stations and other places under the risk of repression, this too would be our method of assisting in the movement. Mahatma Gandhi was no longer prepared to look upon such acts as 'Himalayan Blunders' as he had done in the past.[26]

For Gandhi, 'this [was] the last struggle of [his] life' and he did not want to wait any longer because 'delay is injurious and waiting any further would be humiliation for us.'[27] He thus appealed to the people to follow the mantra 'Do or Die' by saying that,

> ...we shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetration of our slavery. Every true Congressman or [Congress] woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery.[28]

In a message to the nation just before his arrest, Gandhi spelt the task more precisely. Reiterating his faith in non-violence, he elaborated by stating that:

> ... everyone is free to go to the fullest length under *ahimsa*; complete deadlock by strikes and other non-violent means; *satyagrahi*s must go out to die and not to live; they must seek and face death; it is only when individuals go out to die then the nation will survive. *Karenge Ya Marenge* [We will do or die].[29]

Notwithstanding the fact that Gandhi remained the supreme leader of the open rebellion, the Quit India resolution provoked opposition from among his colleagues within the Congress and other major political outfits involved in the nationalist struggle. The AICC was divided and the prominent Congress leader C. Rajagopalachari criticised the resolution on the ground that British withdrawal without settling the Hindu–Muslim question would lead to anarchy. He thus argued that,

> ...it is essential that before a demand for withdrawal can be reasonably made, the major political organisations of this country, namely, the

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> Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, should evolve a joint plan with regard to the provisional government which can take over power and preserve the continuity of the state.[30]

Similarly, B.R. Ambedkar, representing Dalit interests, felt that the Quit India resolution was an attempt 'to do away with the intervention of the British government in the discussion of the Minority Question and thereby securing for the Congress a free hand to settle it on its own lights' (Ambedkar 1945: 407). Upset with the Congress attitude towards the minority question at a critical juncture of the nationalist movement, Ambedkar characterised the Quit India campaign as 'a mad venture' which was, 'in effect, if not in intention, an attempt to win independence by bypassing the Muslim and other minorities' (ibid.). Declaring in rather strong terms that Gandhi's Civil Disobedience was 'both irresponsible and insane' and since this movement 'may be the best way to serve the best interests of the Congress party ... and not the country', he thus exhorted that 'the duty requires that those who do not believe in his movement must take steps to prevent it from taking place.'[31] Similar to Ambedkar, Hindu Mahasabha (1942a) also denounced the *satyagraha* campaign as 'sterile, unmanly and injurious to the Hindu cause.' By endorsing the stance, V.D. Savarkar too criticised the Quit India Movement because it would neither protect the Hindu interests nor that of the country, but would allow the Japanese and other anti-Indian forces to fulfil their evil design.[32] The unequivocal support of Hindu Mahasabha for the British government, however, caused a division within it's rank and file, especially the Bengal contingent, led by N.C. Chatterjee[33] that might have led the Working Committee to resolve that,

> ...the Hindu Mahasabha (in Bengal) shall support the demand for the termination of the present system which keeps India in bondage.… In spite of the policy of responsive cooperation followed by the Hindu Mahasabha, the elementary fact is to be appreciated that unless the freedom of India is recognised and effected, the Defence of India cannot be supported by the mobilisation of the national will. (Hindu Mahasabha 1942b)

While Hindu Mahasabha withdrew participation as a matter of strategy, the Communist Party of India (CPI) defended its withdrawal because the open rebellion was a serious threat to the British

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war effort against the fascist camp. For the CPI, the challenge to the state through a mass mobilisation was unwarranted at a time when the fascist aggression was imminent. So long as the Soviet Union was not involved in the war, it was an imperialist war and the CPI professed a policy of neutrality. With the participation of the Russian contingent in the war against the Axis powers, the War became 'people's war' and the CPI found it perfectly logical to support the British, since it joined hands with the Allied powers. By contributing to the anti-fascist war, Indian masses would, in fact, the CPI believed, advance the cause of national freedom. As India's independence was contingent on the Allied victory, 'we can no more fight for our freedom by opposing the war. We will be cutting our own throats by doing so. We will [therefore] not be hitting at British imperialism at all.'[34] The CPI opposition to the August revolution followed the grand strategy of helping those including the British for combating the fascist forces. The Muslim League abstained from the Congress-led Quit India Movement for reasons connected with the demand for Pakistan. Hence, the League deplored the decision to launch an open rebellion 'in pursuance of the objective of establishing Congress–Hindu domination in India.' Condemning the Movement, it was resolved in a hurriedly called meeting that,

> … this movement is directed not only to coerce the British Government into handing over power to a Hindu oligarchy ... but also to force Mussalmans to submit and surrender to Congress terms and dictation. [Hence] the Working Committee of the All India Muslim League ... calls upon the Muslims to abstain from any participation in the movement initiated by the Congress and to continue to pursue their normal peaceful life.[35]

The articulated Muslim opposition to the August movement provided the British government with a strong argument challenging the Congress claim of representing India as a whole. It was not, therefore, difficult for Churchill, the British premier, to argue that 'the Congress does not represent all and is not India's mouthpiece because ... there are large minorities in India that are bitterly opposed to its plan of cutting loose from the British empire.'[36]

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The Movement and its Development

The Quit India Movement was the melting point of the struggle between the Raj and the Congress, which began with the institutionalisation of nationalist politics through the formation of the INC in 1885. With the adoption of the 8 August resolution, the entire top leadership was incarcerated, which unleashed an unprecedented countrywide mass anti-British campaign. It is plausible to argue that the role of the Congress in mobilising people politically was significant. Equally important was the entire atmosphere which was already a tinder box, ready to be ignited owing to the war crisis and its concomitant socio-economic and political consequences.

In general, three interrelated phases of the Movement can be discerned. First, with the approval of the 8 August 'Do or Die' resolution and the incarceration of Gandhi and his lieutenants in Bombay, the all-India movement which was massive and violent was sparked-off. Within just a week, between 9 and 15 August, the Movement which appeared to be a civil rebellion comparable to the magnitude of any mass revolution was smashed fast, reassuring the Raj's hegemony in India and simultaneously warning the British ruling elite of the possible strength of any future Congress-led movement which was so well-coordinated. Bombay and Calcutta were the storm centres undertaking principally the Gandhian non-violent means. There were casualties in Delhi and Patna witnessed a violent Congress attack on British police in front of the Secretariat on 11 August.[37] Along with urban upsurges in which students took a prominent role, there occurred labour strikes in Lucknow, Kanpur, Bombay, Nagpur and Ahmedabad (Mansergh et al. 1971a: 669, 692–93), which might not have been sympathetic strikes *per se* but undoubtedly posed serious threats to the continuity of the empire. The Tata Steel workers, for instance, resolved not to resume work 'until a national government is formed.'[38] Strike at Ahmedabad textile mills that lasted for more than three months made the administration look vulnerable at a time when the British authority was being severely challenged. Hence, the Secretary of State urged the Viceroy to immediately resolve the strike[39] before it became a serious threat by initiating workers' unrest elsewhere.

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As there were multiple centre of anti-British assault, it would have been impossible for the British to control the Movement without an organised army on the spot which was readily available under the pressure of war.

The Movement entered its second phase from about the middle of August. In the face of brutal oppression, the Quit India upsurge as an all-India phenomenon evaporated rather abruptly. However, there emerged regional centres which sustained the momentum with a greater vigour, especially in areas like northern and western Bihar, eastern UP and western Bengal, and a number of areas in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Orissa witnessed mass attack on the symbols of British authority. Though the local Congress leadership prepared the groundwork, a spontaneous mass participation sustained the 'Do or Die' campaign to a large extent. The second phase also saw the formation of provisional national governments to conduct the struggle. Not only did those governments, though short-lived, consolidate the anti-British sentiments, they also projected the competence of a subject nation to organise its own affairs by evolving a parallel administration. For a variety of complex reasons, though the number of national governments decreased over time, the idea itself provided sustenance to those nationalists spearheading the anti-British campaign successfully, despite severe torture.

In the third phase, the Quit India Movement was confined to Talcher in Orissa, Satara in Maharashtra and Midnapur in Bengal, where provisional governments ran successfully for almost two years defying the British government. Whatever the impact of the continuity of these parallel governments on the Raj as such, these attempts caused alarm to the respective provincial governments.

Assessment

The Quit India Movement was a confrontation of a different type, for the Congress resorted to violence, if necessary, to counter the British attack. It was a mismatched battle though, because the unarmed Congress volunteers fought the British equipped with most modern weapons. This is indicative of the spontaneity of the participants who rose to revolt despite the adverse consequences of undertaking an anti-British onslaught.

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Although the morale of the rebels was high, neither the British police nor the army, comprising predominantly Indians, expressed sympathy for the civil rebellion. Except for Bihar police who declined to cooperate with the authority when the Movement was at its zenith, the police was generally loyal to the Raj. The army was also loyal except for those who defected to the Japanese to form the INA abroad. This certainly enabled the British authority to bring the all-India movement under control within a short period. The rise of dissidents among Bihar police was, however, an indication of shifting loyalty from the imperial ruler to the indigenous Congress-led authority. It was felt even at the highest level of administration, as R. Maxwell, the Home member noted, that,

> ...our officials—especially the Hindus among them—must naturally, in considering their future prospects, look towards the rising rather than setting sun. The one thing quite certain to them is that we shall not be here to employ or protect them in future ... and we cannot [therefore] expect our servants to do more for the present government than their duty actually requires.[40]

Although the loyalty of the Indian contingent of the ICS to the Raj was never in doubt, they seemed to have felt threatened with the prospect of Congress coming to power, which was in the air since the arrival of the Cripps Mission. Naturally, they began to wonder what would happen to them after the winding-up of the empire. Lord Wavell, who was presiding over a fast dismantling imperial authority, appreciated the Indian officers' apprehension. He was reported to have told his cabinet colleagues that Indians belonging to the ICS could not be expected to carry out 'a firm policy unless they are assured of the continuity of the Raj for at least a decade afterwards.'[41]

Not only were there a prospect of the breakdown of the imperial edifice, 'the informal part of collaborative network of support' was also beginning to show signs of collapse (Nandy 1988: 10–11). The alarming proportions which the 1942 rebellion assumed, even with the pre-emptive British strike, are indicative of the extent to which the British reliance on those Indians who chose, for a variety of reason, to give it the informal support, advice and information, and to guarantee it the backing of their own followers, proved abortive.

So in the years of the Raj, the entire British network of Indian allies both in formal and informal sectors was fast weakening.

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The war crisis and their adverse consequences, the prospect of the British withdrawal, the communal schism affecting adversely the law and order situation and, finally, the dubious loyalty of the ICS officers to the government, seem to have significantly undermined the British authority. Viewed thus, the 1942 Quit India Movement was an important signpost for the disintegration of the British empire, for it made the ruling elite aware of the possible strength of any future Congress movement which struck at the empire's foundation, particularly if it occurred after the war when the imperial authority had neither the legitimacy nor was well-equipped psychologically or materially to ensure its continuity.

Concluding Observations

These three movements remained critical in India's freedom struggle that culminated in the 1947 transfer of power from the British. While the Non-Cooperation Movement signalled the rise of Gandhi as a pan-Indian leader, the Civil Disobedience campaign catapulted him to the centrestage. The Quit India Movement reconfirmed that Gandhi was perhaps the most popular nationalist leader, despite the consolidation of various other political forces opposed to the open rebellion and its leader. Although Gandhi led the movement, it hardly remained Gandhian on occasions because the participants also resorted to violence while challenging the British authority in various provincial towns and at the grass roots. And, yet, the Mahatma was hardly disturbed because, he felt, the British government had lost its legitimacy to rule and, hence, the application of violence, if necessary, was justified to force the colonial authority to quit India. It is true that the Quit India Movement was perhaps the most glaring example of spontaneous mass participation, given the fact that the Congress had hardly prepared its volunteers and supporters, as it had done in the erstwhile nationalist campaigns. The war crisis and the continuous failure of the Allied Forces at the eastern front created conditions in which the Congress ultimatum seemed to have acted as 'a catalyst' in mobilising people against 'a declining British power'. The 'Do or Die' slogan captured a sentiment that was nurtured meaningfully by the Congress volunteers to sustain the movement threatening the government beyond contemplation.

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These three movements are indicative of the gradual expansion of the constituencies of the nationalist politics. The Congress, in the early years of the nationalist movement, was confined to the metropolitan cities of India and was clearly divided ideologically between Moderates and Extremists. While the former were in favour of 'prayer, petition and peaceful protest' to gain freedom, the latter adopted militant means to pursue the nationalist goal. Gandhi radically altered the complexion of the freedom struggle by (*a*) involving various sections of the society, and (*b*) taking the anti-British campaign beyond the metropolitan cities to small towns and also villages. The Non-Cooperation Movement was the first of those three Gandhi-led pan-Indian movements that finally led to India's freedom from colonialism. Although Gandhi remained the supreme commander in these movements, non-violence was, however, compromised to a great extent in the Quit India campaign that became violent on various occasions and the Mahatma came out strongly in its favour to combat the atrocious colonial rule.

The period during which these movements were organised was also significant for two specific reasons: first, this was a critical phase for the rise of Muslims as a separate bloc with specific political views that ran counter to that of the Congress. Although the Non-Cooperation Movement was a joint Hindu–Muslim venture given its merger with the Khilafat Movement, both the Civil Disobedience and Quit India campaigns failed to involve the Muslims, to a large extent. The Dalits among the Hindus did not seem to have enthusiastically participated in the Congress campaign, presumably because of the failure of the Congress to address their genuine socio-economic grievances in a most meaningful way. Second, these movements also expanded the constituencies of nationalist politics by gradually involving the subaltern classes. By accepting peasants and workers as partners in the struggle against the colonial state, the Congress became a platform for different sections of the society. These three movements, therefore, were not merely political struggles for freedom; they, by challenging the indigenous vested interests, also articulated clear socio-economic agenda for the downtrodden. In this sense, the campaign that began with the Non-Cooperation Movement was a break with the past when the Congress-led nationalist challenge was devoid of its sheen which it gained with the arrival of Gandhi on the political scene. These movements heralded, therefore, a new era in India's freedom

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struggle which, while seeking freedom from the foreign rule, also prepared the ground for waging organised movements against social evils, justified in the name of religion.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY AND THE AXIS POWERS, 1941–45

> Civil disobedience alone is not enough to overthrow the British. As the British Government relies on the strength of bayonets, we, too, should use bayonets in order to defeat them decisively. As the enemy stands before us with the drawn sword, we should fight him only with the aid of the sword.
>
> —Subhas Chandra Bose[42]

> Throughout my public career, I have always felt that though India is otherwise ripe for independence in every way, she has lacked one thing, namely, an army of liberation.
>
> —Subhas Chandra Bose[43]

The above quotations reflect Subhas Chandra Bose's predilection for armed struggle as the means to attain freedom. The period between 1941 and 1945 was the culmination of a tendency which Bose had displayed since adolescence. He, unlike other Congress leaders, rejected non-violence as a creed but regarded it as an expedient at the same time. His passion for methods other than non-violence was well demonstrated in his student life, both in Calcutta and Cambridge.[44] The formation of a paramilitary force, with Bose as the commander-in-chief during the 1928 Congress session in Calcutta, is indicative of the urge he felt for an organised volunteer corp. So, what came in the wake of the formation of the INA or Azad Hind Fauz, convincingly showed Bose's passion for violence as a means to liberate India.

Similarly, the acceptance of the Axis Powers, as a dependable ally in his zeal to supplement the Indian national struggle from outside, symbolised to what extent Bose advanced the opportunistic trend in politics. He himself admitted that 'do not be carried away by ideological considerations; do not bother about the internal politics of other countries which is no concern of ours. Believe me when I say that the enemies of British imperialism are our friends and

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allies.'[45] The available evidence suggests that to Bose, ideological considerations were not primary in his selection of an ally in this respect; in fact, he would not have declined the offer of Soviet Russia, had she not restrained herself from helping India 'on the plea that the Russo-Germany alliance of 1939 was about to break and negotiations between the British Government and Russia were in progress' (Ghosh 1946: 90). During his stay in Japan, he tried to cultivate the Soviet alternative in view of the Non-Aggression Pact with the Axis powers. But repeated refusal on part of the Soviet Union may have brought Bose closer to the Axis Powers. What prompted Bose to try the Soviet alternative repeatedly: the attraction of the Bolshevik ideology or the military strength of the Soviet state? Answer to the question may not be complete in view of the ambiguities discernible in Bose's writings and activities. It is true, as Bose's own writings suggest, that Bolshevism as an ideology did not impress him much, but he was moved by the qualities of leadership that Lenin showed in the aftermath of the Socialist Revolution of 1917 to rescue Russia 'from disaster and from a tragedy similar to that which overtook Spain.'[46] He also appreciated the fascist leader Mussolini because 'he [Mussolini] knew his mind and was not afraid to act.'[47] Interestingly, Bose who appreciated Mussolini characterised Hitler as a German version of the Fakir of Ipi, with whom it was impossible to talk reasonably on any matter even for a few minutes (Voigt 1972: 15). Bose's pejorative remark seems to have been prompted by Hitler's decision not to concede to the proposal for a joint guarantee from the Axis Powers regarding India's freedom after war (Werth 1978: 36). Even during the meeting on 27 May 1942, he further reiterated his racist views which he explained in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler was critical of non-violence as a method as it was 'grounded on wrong assumptions' (Voigt 1972: 14). Following his logic, the fascist leader denied Bose any military help[48] to strengthen the effort Bose undertook to supplement the freedom struggle at home.

According to Hitler what Bose was demanding might have been an effective instrument of political propaganda but given the strength of the 'Indian Legion' under the aegis of the fascist government, it meant nothing.[49] Bose's visit to Germany was frustrating because not only was he disheartened by Fuehrer's indifference to the cause of India's freedom, he was not received as well in Berlin as heartily as he expected (Lebra 1972: 108).

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Despite being critical of Hitler, Bose always admired authoritarian personality. He was fascinated by Kamak Ataturk who was 'a shrewd strategist and an acute diplomat'[50] and also by Stalin who, according to him, held in his hands destinies of the European nations for the next few decades.[51] Although he foresaw the strength of personalities, his lack of understanding of the international situation ruined his future. His emphatic belief that the Axis Powers were going to win despite indications otherwise, perhaps paved significantly the way for his downfall.[52]

So ideological considerations did not prompt Bose to find an ally in the Axis camp; instead, his firm belief in the inevitability of the downfall of the British empire and the 'victory of the axis powers'[53] propelled Bose to the Axis fold. Now, in terms of concrete achievement what did Bose attain as a result of submerging his identity with fascist bloc? Although he failed to convince Hitler to back the free India Declaration, his propaganda mission from Berlin produced results: he was allowed to use broadcasting facilities in Berlin and, accordingly, the Azad Hind (Free India) Radio was inaugurated in 1941. A monthly journal *Azad Hind* was also instituted to serve the propaganda offensive. While these were being pursued, Bose had been trying to create an Indian army equipped with modern arms under the aegis of the German government. Although the recruitment to the Indian Legion started as early as September, Bose could not draw more than 3,000 soldiers, who were prisoners of war in Germany and North Africa. The army was less Indian than its counterpart in the Far East because (*a*) the members of the Indian Legion had to take a formal oath of loyalty to Hitler and Bose simultaneously, with the understanding that they would be put 'into action only where common Indo-German interests were at stake',[54] and (*b*) the training personnel were German too. These were the basic limitations that the Indian Legion in Europe had since its inception. It is now plausible why Hitler was reluctant to back the Free-India declaration, as it would be of small practical significance from the point of view of Germany. Bose's insistence on such a declaration at that point may be seen as to what extent he was suffering from 'megalomania'. Nevertheless, his presence in Germany was not futile because by his commitment to strengthen the national cause, he convinced the Japanese, who had close eyes on Bose through her Embassy in Berlin since October 1941. Therefore, when Bose realised the lukewarm attitude of the Nazi leadership as well as the strategic importance of fighting in

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Asia, he looked to the Japanese for help. To the imperial Nippon Government, this was a strategic move because by 1943, the INA that was created out of the prisoners of war in the Far East, with Mohan Singh as the leader, was undergoing a crisis of leadership after the arrest of its leader on the suspicion of being a British spy. The transfer of Bose from Europe to the Far East was decided with a view to 'infusing fresh life into the INA.'[55]

Bose's arrival in east Asia in July 1943 galvanised the already dismantled INA. The erstwhile INA had not only been weak numerically, but had also been handicapped by the suspicion of the common soldiers that Mohan Singh was incapable of handling the Japanese to the advantage of the Indian national struggle. Apart from some modest psychological value, the Singh-led INA was militarily insignificant at least without a complementary rising in India. Nevertheless, the Japanese hoped to capitalise on the sincerity and commitment of the rank and file core of the INA by revitalising the organisation. This lay behind the replacement of Mohan Singh by Bose, whom they had been watching since his escape to Berlin. The choice of Bose by the Japanese in this regard was strategically guided in the sense that to present the INA as a real obstruction to the allied war endeavours, one needed someone who could unite the prisoners of war to a common cause, and given Bose's record of public service, he was found appropriately suitable for this purpose. The calculations proved worthwhile and not only the Non-Voluntary Group led by Shahnawaz Khan, G.B. Dhillon and K.S. Sehgal, but the civilians too joined the INA offensive campaign in large numbers. This enormous increase (from 10,000 to 43,000) is illustrative of Bose's success in raising the level of consciousness of the Indians in east Asia as well as his ability to put that consciousness into practice in the form of their military participation in the INA.

What Bose attained in 1943 had its root in the preceding years. Rashbehari Bose, an exile in Japan, had been trying to unite various Indian associations in the British and non-British territories, championing the cause of freedom since 1936–37. The formation of the Congress Party in Bangkok in 1937 was an upshot of his efforts. Only in the Bangkok Conference of June 1942 were concrete steps taken and a new organisation, the Indian Independence League (IIL), came into being. The conference resolved to sponsor a movement for achieving the complete independence of India through the IIL. It was also resolved that 'in furtherance of this objective, the

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INA should be raised from among the Indian soldiers (prisoners of war) and such civilian as might be recruited for that purpose.'[56] A 'Council of Action' under the presidency of Mr Rashbehari Bose was also formed to speed up the formation of the INA. The Bangkok conference, therefore, achieved what the earlier one in Tokyo in March 1942 could not. In fact, the Tokyo conference failed because of the disagreement among the delegates over the acceptance of Rashbehari Bose who was seen as an imposition on the IIL by the Japanese.[57]

The Japanese government patronised the conference and the anti-British tone of the resolutions was psychologically advantageous to their war efforts. The purpose of encouraging such activities was to wean Indians from their allegiance to the British; had they been successful, this would have been, from the point of view of Japan, a positive contribution to the formation of Great Asia co-prosperity sphere. The above calculations certainly drove the Japanese to enlist the support of the prisoners of war. Major Fujiwara, a comparatively junior staff officer, an idealist who fervently believed in the Greater Asia co-prosperity sphere, contacted Captain Mohan Singh and Captain Mohammad Akram Khan when they surrendered on 15 December 1941. After a prolonged discussion, Captain Mohan Singh agreed to join the Indian independence movement and to cooperate with the Japanese forces (Khan 1946: 15). The selection of Mohan Singh as the General Officer-in-Command (GOC) of the INA created a schism among the rank and file of the prisoners of war: (*a*) the volunteers, who trusted the Japanese and were prepared to join the INA, and (*b*) non-volunteers who did not trust the Japanese and remained aloof to the whole INA business. Shahnawaz Khan, one of the surrendered officer, and who belonged to the latter, attributed the Split to two reasons: (*a*) the selection of Captain Mohan Singh who was a junior officer, as the GOC raised the question of super session of some very senior and capable officers, and (*b*) given the limitations of Captain Mohan Singh, however sincere he was to the cause of the Indian independence, there was a suspicion that he would not be able to cope with the Japanese intrigue and, therefore, the INA would be exploited by the Japanese purely for their personal ends.

From the very beginning, the INA failed to unite all the prisoners of war. Sceptical of the Japanese motive, the IIL central committee never considered wise to go by verbal assurance only;

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the committee insisted on a formal declaration supporting the Indian's armed assault on the British. The Japanese never took it seriously, for a formal declaration entailed regular supply of arms and ammunition, otherwise the declaration seemed pious. Moreover, the creation of Hikari Kikan, a department of liaison between the League and the Japanese government and military administration by the Japanese, confirmed the apprehension that the League was not independent of Japanese control. In fact, the Kikan interfered constantly even in the day-to-day activities of the League which was strongly resented.[58] The suspicion that the Japanese had ulterior motive was so emphatic that Mohan Singh felt that 'it was quite clear to us now that they wanted to conquer India through Indians and by extending help and also material aid to us they were simply helping themselves'.[59] The tension was aggravated first in the 'disagreement over the issue of sending the INA to the Burma front' and second due to the arrest of Colonel N.S. Gill of the INA on suspicion of being a British spy. These two incidents caused resentment, as the IIL was never consulted while taking these decisions. The final blow to the already crippled INA was given on 20 December, just within six months of its formation, when Mohan Singh was arrested. As a result and 'a prior secret order of Mohan Singh to dissolve the INA as soon as his arrest',[60] the INA virtually collapsed.

The INA in its first phase did not make much headway in so far as the Indian independence movement was concerned. Nonetheless, the British military was scared considerably of its strength and admitted that the INA campaign was undermining the loyalty and morale of the British Indian army.[61] Until it entered its second phase after the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose in east Asia in July 1943, the INA caused alarm to the British authority, which believed that Bose's arrival in Asia greatly increased 'the tempo of subversive propaganda and appears to have galvanised the IIL into greater political activity.'[62] Before his joining, the IIL was only publicised in connection with Japan. Bose clearly intended to raise the movement into a national campaign for freedom supported by all three Axis Powers.[63] In all his interviews and speeches, Bose reiterated his belief in an Axis victory and in the need for an armed revolt in India to coincide with invasion from the east.[64] In order to put forward his plans into practice, he proclaimed the formation of a provisional government in the Far East and he also

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tried to augment the strength of the INA. As far as the first move was concerned, it was a master move in the game of international politics because it enabled Bose to declare war on the enemies (24 October 1943) and to claim an equal status for the government in the comity of the League of East Asiatic Nations.

Whatever Bose may have attained militarily by associating with the Japanese, he alienated Jawaharlal Nehru completely. Critically of fascism, Nehru apprehended that if India won independence with the Japanese help, British imperialism would be replaced by the Japanese. He also warned not to 'forget our own struggle for freedom for slogans which may sound pleasant to the ear but have little reality behind them or vague promises which have been broken often'[65]—a slanting remark probably hinting at the Japanese promises which proved pious later. In 1942, he came out with categorical statements demanding resistance to Bose and the Indian troops he had led because the army was no more than 'a dummy force under Japanese control.'[66]

The second part of the proclamation required Japanese approval and Tojo, the premier, refused to commit himself to the expansion plans and half jokingly suggested that 'the disorderly crowd should be controlled' (Mihir Bose 1982: 213). In view of the poor show of the INA under Mohan Singh, the characterisation 'disorderly crowd' is understandable; but with the passage of time, the INA or the 'second front in India's war of emancipation', as Bose preferred to call,[67] became a force of considerable strength. The British record shows that 'the total number of persons enrolled in or involved in the INA activities was approximately 43,000 of which 20,000 were members of British India Army. The war files reveal that in early February 1944, the British officials were so convinced of the strength of the 'Army of Liberation, led by Bose that they urgently felt the necessity of a counter-propaganda.'[68] That it was not merely a collection of Japanese Inspired Fifth Columnists (JIFC) as it was officially characterised [69]can be substantiated by the vigour and seriousness that the British government showed in order to counter the INA offensive. 'It concentrated on psychological warfare and from the beginning of 1944 it carried out intensive campaigns through weekly leaflets and news-sheets in Japanese, Burmese and Indian languages' (ibid.: 236).[70]

However strong the INA appeared during the war, it is quite clear from the available evidence that the main source of strength

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of the INA was derived from its association with the Axis Powers, though Bose in his zeal to fight never agreed. He realised this in July 1944, when the tide of the battle had turned and the Japanese retreated. Bose wanted INA to continue confronting the Allied until their aim was fulfilled. However, Japanese withdrawal stopped military help to the INA and, therefore, despite his zeal to carry on the battle, he reversed his order.[71] What Bose would have achieved even with full supply in otherwise unfavourable circumstances is debatable. This shows, however, that the INA was a subordinate wing to the Japanese and, therefore, its penetrating power and even survival required outside help. Not only was the INA weak vis-à-vis the British forces, it also failed to rouse the people to the extent of an internal revolt as Bose had anticipated; instead, he was criticised strongly for his cooperation with the Axis Powers at home and even his party, Forward Bloc, his brain child, did not approve his association with the Japanese. Bose's statements after the 'Imphal defeat' in November 1944—'the INA had defeated the enemy in every battle and only the unexpected heavy rain had washed away the chances of certain success in Imphal' (Khan 1946: 128–29) or 'the final victory in this war would belong to Japan and Germany ... and that new phase of war was approaching in which the initiative would again lie in the hands of the Japanese'[72]—meant to sustain the morale of the INA personnel under adverse circumstances.

Bose's assessment of the strength of the INA and the prospect of the Japanese victory even after the war situation had tilted in favour of the Allied forces, may be explained in terms of the following possibilities: as a leader of an offensive campaign he did not want to undermine the morale of the INA soldiers and, therefore, even under the most adverse situation, he had to be optimistic in order to infuse new life into the INA. He may have been quite confident of a mass-upsurge as soon the INA arrived in India. This may be illustrative of his megalomania and, hence, he had lost touch with reality.

Whatever optimism he showed may be said to have served his propaganda purpose and, therefore, he rather deliberately resorted to that. One can argue that it was natural for Bose who aspired to achieve a goal with a small army to value propaganda activity more than the real military raid. But his faith in the victory of the Axis Powers or Japan being the saviour of Asia, even after the fall of Rangoon in April 1945, certainly questioned the soundness of his

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strategic calculation. The extent to which Japan was sincere to the cause of Indian independence is debatable. However, Bose's own writings and speeches indicate that Bose was quite certain about it. He argued that the promise to give complete independence to Burma and The Philippines in 1943 and the transfer of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1944 and putting them under an Indian Governor, were illustratively, he argued, of the extent to which the Japanese were sincere to the cause of Pan-Asianism. Although Bose renamed the islands, as *Shahid* (Martyr) and *Swaraj* (independent) respectively, and appointed Lt. Colonel Loganadhan as the first chief commissioner, it had propaganda value only. In fact, the Japanese admiral who was the *de facto* ruler pointed out that in view of the strategic importance of those islands, 'nothing of real value would be in Loganadhan's hand, at the most, some departments of civil administration' (Mihir Bose 1982: 220). The interference was frequent and Loganadhan complained to Bose that the Japanese had made his 'whole existence redundant' (ibid.: 221). Bose was helpless despite his earlier success in an official recognition of the INA as an equal partner. In another substantial issue, the release of Mohan Singh who was serving a sentence, Bose had to accept what the Japanese had decided. Why he agreed is still dilatable. Mohan Singh recalled that inspite of Bose's promise to pursue the Japanese government to set him free, he made no attempt possibly because he was not sure whether Mohan Singh would support him when he had declared his overriding loyalty to Nehru.[73] Major Fujiwara, the architect of the INA in its first phase, reminiscenced that 'Bose did not dare to have General Mohan Singh released for fear of its possible adverse effects on the ties between the INA and the provisional government of free India on the one hand and the Japanese Army, particularly, Hikari Kikan on the other' (Fujiwara 1970: 157–58). Even if Bose had pressed hard the question of Mohan Singh's release, it is doubtful whether he would have succeeded, since Mohan Singh was captured on espionage charges. Insistence on Mohan Singh's release would, therefore, create unnecessary tension between the INA and the Japanese, which Bose strove to avoid for obvious reasons. Moreover, Bose may not have pursued the matter seriously because he knew well that the reinstatement of Singh would alienate the high ranking Indian officers of the British Indian Army who were not in the INA in its first phase because of the imposition of junior officer as 'General' Singh was, on them.

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The above discussion draws out perhaps two contrasting aspects of Bose's political career: (*a*) Bose in his ambition to be the 'bride' not the 'bride's maid' might be sceptical of Mohan Singh's attitude in future, especially when the latter owed his loyalty to Nehru. This might have led Bose, who was then not merely a commander of an army but the 'Asiatic Version of "Fuherer" or "Netaji", as he preferred to call himself,[74] to calculate that Mohan Singh's release would have been worth-avoiding, and (*b*) that he did not press hard might be illustrative of how he was strategically guided or how he and his INA were subservient to the Japanese in real terms despite his success in manipulating some decisions in his favour. In fact, Bose was not sure entirely about the sincerity of the 'British of the East' as he characterised the Japanese in the early 1930s. He believed that in helping the INA to drive the British out of India, the Japanese were doing no special favour; on the contrary, the strategic importance of India from the point of view of the Japanese empire in east Asia was the prime consideration influencing their decision. The insincerity of the Japanese became apparent with the gradual deteriorations of the Japanese position in the war. Bose had to intervene all the time in order to protect his men from the possible maltreatment that might be inflicted on them. When the entire Japanese regiment along with the INA retreated from Rangoon in April–May 1945, Bose's presence then, for instance, prevented the Japanese from discriminating against them.

Concluding Observations

The INA experiment was a failure and Subhas Chandra Bose by joining the vanquished Axis Powers became a villain of history. Whatever the assessment in nationalist historiography, his involvement with the fascist powers identified him as one who, by his ideological tilt in favour of fascism, neglected the cause of India's freedom. Our discussion has shown that notwithstanding Bose's genuine commitment to national liberation movement in India, exclusive reliance on the Japanese deprived him of freedom of action; he became, as it were, a pawn in the Japanese hands. Because of the INA's inherent limitations, it was neither possible nor practical to do away with the Japanese. So, Bose seems to have been caught in a peculiar situation where he probably saw

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the problems and their remedies but failed to execute them in the adverse circumstances. He lacked perhaps the skill to choose the right partner at the right moment.

Bose, it seems, was a born loser. During his career as a Congressman—between 1921 and 1941—he rose to prominence rapidly by defeating the Gandhi-nominated candidate for Congress presidency in 1939; he lost his popularity equally rapidly and failed even to win the leftists within the Congress over to him despite his crusade against the right wing Congress. It indicates, *inter alia*, Bose's failure to build up a constituency of his own. He drew support, for what he stood for; his failure to sustain the support demonstrated that he had neither the charisma of Gandhi or Nehru, nor was he able to evolve an ideology to maintain his constituency. Machiavellian in his conviction, Bose failed completely to grasp the dynamics of Indian politics in which religion, caste and loyalties based on primordial ties played decisive roles.

Both on the national and international scenes, Bose's attempt to attain the goal he was striving for, was, therefore, abortive. Notwithstanding his sincerity to the cause, he lost to his adversaries because of his lack of understanding of *realpolitik*. By trying out several alternatives, Bose, however, expresses his dilemma in accepting non-violence as a means to attain national independence. Thus the revitalisation of the INA in order to supplement the independence struggle in India seems most logical. Despite its limitations as an army, the INA by launching an attack on the British outside India infused fresh life into those opposing Gandhi and non-violence. So, even though he fought from the wrong side of the fence, Bose's patriotism, sincerity and devotion to the cause of India's freedom made him a class by himself.

INDIAN NAVAL UPRISING

The Indian naval uprising in February 1946 appeared to be indicative of the strengthening of a subtle wave of increasingly militant and non-mainstream micropolitical activities in the country during this time. At the same time, such activities also reflected the tendency on part of the pan-Indian parties, particularly Congress, to desist from touching upon issues that had to do with basic institutions of government like armed forces, amongst others, notwithstanding the

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veracity of the cause. In such a scenario, given the preoccupation of the major parties to negotiate with the colonisers the terms of furthering the cause of independence, smaller yet formidable mass and militant political activities became the characterising features of the first quarter of 1946. Of such activities, the naval uprising stands out prominently, presumably due to two obvious reasons. One, it raised the alarm bells for the British that the most dependable pillar of the empire could no longer be banked upon unsuspectingly. Two, it also brought to the fore the hidden duality between the radical—led by the leftist elements of the national movement—and the conservative—championed by the dominant section of the Congress—factions of the nationalist leadership on the issue of taking up the cudgels on behalf of each and every victimised section of the Indian society.

The Mutiny Begins

The genesis of the outbreak of the naval uprising remains a debatable point among scholars and various participants of the event. Generally, the standard Indian writings on the subject relate the genesis of the event to either 'flagrant racial discrimination, unpalatable food and abuses to boot' (Chandra et al. 1989: 479) or 'bad food and racial insults' (Sarkar 1989: 423–25). However, as a pioneer of the uprising later reminisces,

> ...this was not a mere food riot.... We did not hesitate to spell out for them the stark reality of the situation.… Their present conditions were bad but the future would be worse, for, now that the British could do without their services, they would be unceremoniously thrown out on the streets. (Dutt 1971: 112)

Unsurprisingly, in this regard, the official version of the colonial administration confines the uprising 'to the alleged behaviour of their commander'[75] rather than investigating the real causes of the unusual uprising in the cadres of their armed forces.

The lack of unanimity, therefore, amongst the various opinions on the genesis of the uprising, signifies the unconventional nature of the event in comparison to other mass movements which had been initiated for certain declared reasons. Nevertheless, it may

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be argued that the naval uprising may have been a product of a combination of certain both long term and short term causes. Undoubtedly, on the long term basis, the Indian members of the armed forces, like other Indians, were subjected not only to severe racial discrimination at the hands of the British officials but all other sorts of unjustifiable discrimination in terms of pay, allowances, promotion, general treatment in the barracks in terms of food and so on, had been meted out to them on regular basis. This would have ingrained a feeling of deprivation amongst the Indian soldiers which seemingly went unrealised, unnoticed and un-acted upon by the national leadership to a large extent, if not total. Hence, when the situation in the country during the first quarter of 1946 appeared volatile with unplanned and public-spirited mass movements becoming the rule of the day, as in case of the trial of the INA officers, the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) ratings would have found it prudent to air their ire as well.

Thus, it was in the background of the political lull in the country that the naval ratings (non-commissioned sailors) on the signal training school HMIS Talwar showed signs of defiance by refusing to take food on 18 February 1946. The very next morning, on 19 February, this hunger strike was joined by the ratings of other barracks like Castle and Fort giving it the form of a general strike. Having the support of the left political groups and leaders, the striking ratings quickly elected S.M. Khan as the President of the Strike Committee and formed a four member Negotiating Committee 'to carry on negotiations for the fulfillment of the demands with the Naval authorities and the government' (Banerjee: 1981: 32). Interestingly, the demands of the ratings consisted of both the redressal of their particular grievances as ratings like equal pay for equal work to both Indian and British sailors, as well as general demands in sync with political demands of the nationalist leaders like release of the INA prisoners. However, what was baffling appeared to be the ambivalent position taken by the ratings on the issue of either waging an all out struggle or to return back to their barracks after highlighting their grievances. Taking undue advantage of this, the British ordered the ratings to go back to their barracks and on their doing so, carried out seize of the rebels on 20 February, setting the stage for a pitched battle between the striking ratings and army guards.

On 21 February, skirmishes took place between the ratings and the government forces when the former tried to break out of the

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seize at the Castle Barracks. Soon, the news of fighting between the ratings and the government forces reached not only to the residents of the city of Bombay but also to various other parts of the country. As a result, three kinds of response emerged from across the country and the political spectrum. First, the people of Bombay showed a great deal of camaraderie with the agitating ratings by not only joining in their strikes but also by providing all possible assistance to the ratings by way of food, essential things, and so on. Second, in other parts of the country, notably in Calcutta and Karachi, the strike spread to various other units of the RIN, Royal Indian Army and the Royal Indian Air Force, along with other business and commercial establishments of the people. Consequently, for some time, it looked as if the strike of the Bombay ratings had truly taken an all-India character with no end to it in sight owing to the formidability of the agitation (Sarkar 2007: 97).

Responses to the Mutiny

However, the third kind of response to the ratings strike came from various political formations of the country as per their perception of the event. Gandhi being very critical of the event, it was obvious for the Congress not to support the strike of the ratings. In fact, the Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee went to the Governor to assure him about the futility of the disturbances and promising the help of Congress volunteers to help maintain order. Similarly, the Muslim League was willing to disown the ratings strike and extend all out support to the government to find a solution to the problem. However, the left parties and the left leaning leaders of the Congress like Aruna Asaf Ali appeared adamant on addressing the grievances of the ratings before any compromise formula could be initiated. Eventually, both Congress and League leaders particularly Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, having tacit support of Jinnah also, appealed to the ratings to give up their strike and surrender in view of the huge British build-up in Bombay to deal with them. Finally, the communists also asked the ratings to surrender and opt for peaceful methods of settling their grievances, as a result of which the ratings uprising came to a halt on 23 February 1946.

Before coming to an end, the naval uprising had taken historical proportions in terms of both its expansion and the government

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repression that followed. Within a span of just a few days, the strike had taken within its grips many of the military establishments in the country, besides the massive pubic support pouring for it in cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi. In quick reaction, the affected cities witnessed the government erecting enormous barricades and deploying massive security forces. Yet, pubic ire was vented in the form of gross damage to public properties like police stations, post offices, banks, railway stations, tram depots and even grain shops. Moreover, in certain cases, Europeans were also attacked while the battles between the police and the agitators were the norm in the cities (Biswanath Bose 1988: 96). In subsequent clashes, massive loss of life and property was reported. As a government report noted,

> ...the civilian casualties up to date amount to 228 killed and 1,046 injured, of whom 658 are still in hospital. Twenty-four police officers and 67 men were injured and 3 constables were killed. The total damage is not yet estimated but includes looting or destructions of 9 banks, 30 shops, 10 post offices, 10 police chowkies, 1,200 street lamps and 64 government grain shops and a Salvation Army building.[76]

The RIN strike, despite being brief and focussed in its appeal, has been hailed as one of the legends of the national movement in the country. In conjunction with other related militant and mass movements coming in wake of the INA trials, the naval uprising gave an impression of what is emphatically called as 'the almost revolution.' What was significant about this strike was that it was called and carried out without any sort of direct or indirect support from major nationalist parties like the Congress or the Muslim League. On the contrary, when the strike gained momentum, both in terms of its spatial and activities parameters, and leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali came out openly in support of it, Mahatma Gandhi seemingly admonished it in his statements, later published in *Harijan*,

> ...so far as I can see, in resorting to mutiny they were badly advised. If it was for grievance, fancied or real, they should have waited for the guidance and intervention of political leaders of their choice. If they mutinied for the freedom of India, they were doubly wrong. They could not do so without a call from a prepared revolutionary party. They were thoughtless and ignorant, if they believed that by

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> their might they would deliver India from foreign domination.… They who incited the mutineers did not know what they were doing. The latter were bound to submit ultimately. (Gandhi 1975: 171)

He even apparently ridiculed the idea of Hindu–Muslim unity during the naval uprising as being tried by Aruna Asaf Ali by saying that she would 'rather unite Hindus and Muslims at the barricade than on the constitutional front' (ibid.: 183). However, Aruna Asaf Ali appeared to be equally vociferous and prophetic in her reply to the Mahatma when she retorted that it would be indeed far easier 'to unite the Hindus and Muslims at the barricades than on the constitutional front' (Nandurkar 1977: 163, quoted in Sarkar 1989: 425).

Thus, instead of taking it as an opportunity to argue for the departure of British from India, the national leaders appeared busy with sorting the merit of the unprecedented event. Most, if not all, of them, directly or indirectly, tried to dissuade, for obvious reasons, the striking ratings to return to their barracks so that normality could be maintained by the government. Yet, the pointers shown by the mutiny became obvious for the government leading it to accelerate the pace of transfer of power to the Indians (R.P. Dutt 1949: 542). It became quite clear for both the British government as well as the major political parties in the country that the general masses were no longer in a mood to wait any longer for independence. While the Congress and Muslim League remained busy with settling the terms of independence with the government, common Indians seemed to be ready for a final blow to the British rule in India (Sarkar 1982: 968). Thus, despite various inherent organisational limitations and lack of support from mainstream political parties and prominent national leaders, the naval uprising of February 1946 was undoubtedly a precursor of the dawn of independence for the country.

NOTES

1. India Office Records, London (IOR hereafter), Mss Eur. E. 264 (6) Chelmsford to Montague, 23 February 1922. The total number of national schools and colleges rose from 52,879 to 53,968.
2. Referring to dwindling number of national schools and colleges, *The Statesman* (7 July 1922) ridiculed the idea of boycott as 'nothing but projecting "insanity" of the Congress leadership.'

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3. *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (25 August 1924) wrote with grief that by deliberately attributing motive to the leadership, the government gained on various occasions when Muslim workers both distanced themselves and also attacked their Hindu counterparts.
4. IOR, Mss. Eur. D. 609 (2), Zetland Collection, My Diary, 1 June and 6 June 1921.
5. *The Modern Review*, July 1921, p. 11.
6. IOR. Mss. Eur. D. 609 (5), Zetland Collection, Ronaldshay to Montague, 15 June 1921.
7. Gandhi reiterated his argument in a meeting in Calcutta on 11 September 1921, by condemning the strike fever which tended to disrupt unnecessarily the amicable relationship between the industrialists and the workers (*The Statesman*, 22 September 1921).
8. (*Leader*, 13 February 1921, quoted in Sarkar 1989: 209)
9. On 5 February 1922, at Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district of UP, a mob of about 2,000 villagers led by Congress volunteers attacked a police station killing and burning the entire police staff, consisting two sub-inspectors of police, 18 constables and one chowkidar.
10. The CWC resolution, adopted at the Bardoli meeting, held on 11 and 12 February 1922 (quoted in Bamford 1925: 70).
11. Civil Disobedience was the only means of challenging both the British rule which appeared to Gandhi 'a personification of violence' and the growing hatred towards the agents of this rule which took the form of casual assassination (Gopal 1957: 55).
12. IOR, Halifax Papers, Mss. Eur. C. 152 (6), Irwin to Wedgewood Benn, 20 February 1930.
13. IOR, Halifax Papers, Mss. Eur. C. 152 (4), Irwin to Wedgewood Benn, Secretary of State, 20 March 1930.
14. IOR, Halifax Papers, Mss. Eur. C. 152 (25), Tej Bahadur Sapru to Irwin, 19 September 1930.
15. IOR, Halifax Papers, Mss. Eur. C. 152 (4), Gandhi to Irwin, 12 March 1930.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. *Harijan*, 16 August 1942.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. FO Bell Papers (Tss), p. 18. Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge (CSAS hereafter).
26. IOR, R/3/1/350, T. Wickenden's report on the Congress disturbances, p. 21. Jawaharlal Nehru's statement of 20 July 1942 was quoted in this report.
27. Gandhi's press interview of 6 August 1942 (quoted in Tottenham 1942: 62).
28. Gandhi's speech at the AICC meeting on 8 August 1942 (Gandhi 1971: 392).
29. Gandhi's message to the country at 5 a.m. on 9 August 1942 and Gandhi's speech at the AICC meeting on 8 August 1942 (Gandhi 1971: 403).

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30. IOR, L/I/1/55, Rajagopalachari to Gandhi 18 July 1942. This letter was signed by three other Congressmen, namely, K. Santhanam, S. Ramanathan and T.S.S. Rajan.
31. IOR, L/PJ/7/1816, Ambedkar's press statement on 18 August 1942. Also in *The Hindu* (28 August 1942).
32. IOR, R/3/2/33, Savarkar's intercepted press statement of 15 August 1942.
33. IOR, R/3/2/33, Intelligence Report on the meeting, D.A. Brayden, Central Intelligence Officer, Government of Bengal to MO Carter, Secretary to the Bengal Governor, 11 August 1942.
34. IOR, L/I/i/1116, intercepted pamphlet, written by P.C. Joshi (1942: 12) with the title, *The Indian Communist Party: Its Policy and Work in the War of Liberation*.
35. 'The Muslim League Working Committee Resolution, 20 August 1942' (Mansergh et al. 1971a: 771).
36. IOR, Mss. Eur F. 125/145, Prime Minister's statement in the House of Commons, 10 September 1942.
37. IOR, R/3/2/37, Tgm, Home Department, Government of India to the Secretary of State, 14 August 1942. It was reported that the government authority was undermined for two days after the famous seize of 11 August 1942.
38. 'Linlithgow (Viceroy) to Amery, the Secretary of State, 21 August 1942', (Mansergh et al. 1971a: 777)
39. IOR, L/PO/6/102A, Amery to Linlithgow, 28 August 1942.
40. (Mansergh et al. 1971b: 157), R. Maxwell to G. Laithwaite, private secretary to the Viceroy, 24 October 1942.
41. (Mansergh et al. 1975: 334), Lord Wavell's address to his cabinet colleagues.
42. Extracts from remarks at a press conference held at the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, on 19 June 1943 (Bose 1965: 176).
43. Speech at a military review of the INA (5 July 1943).
44. IOR, R/3/2/21: A report by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, Calcutta, 1 February 1941.
45. 'The Quit India Movement Broadcast' (Bose 1965: 143).
46. 'The Ramgarh Address, 1940' (Bose 1964: 292).
47. Ibid.: 292.
48. Hitler summarised Free India's task as four-fold: neutralisation of the British influence, acting as a barrier against Russian pressure, reaching an agreement with Japan about India's eastern border, and finally internal reorganisation of India to achieve unity which might however, he added in a less optimistic tone, take perhaps one or even two hundred years. (Drawn on a typescript in German, elaborating the conversation between Hitler and Subhas Chandra Bose, procured from Mr Abid Hasan who was the private secretary of Subhas Chandra Bose on 21 May 1941.)
49. Ibid.
50. 'On Kemal Ataturk: A Tribute by Bose' (Bose 1964: 79).
51. 'The German Defeat', broadcast, 25 May 1945 (Bose 1965: 250).
52. 'Freedom Struggle Survived' Bose's address to an independence day meeting in Berlin, 26 January 1943 (Bose 1965: 167).
53. On Arrival in Japan, Bose's statement to the press, 19 June 1943 (Bose 1965: 175); 'To the German and Italian People', Bose's radio broadcast on 23 June 1943 (Bose 1965: 177).

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54. A Report on the organisation and training of the Free India Army in Europe 1941–42, by Walter Harbich, in S.K. Bose (1970: 55).
55. IOR L/WS/1/1576: Note of the Japanese Offensive against India, 22 July 1943.
56. IOR/L/WS/1/1577: Formation of the IIL; for the full text of the Bangkok Resolution, see Toye (1959: 189–200).
57. M. Sivaram, ex-minister in the Provisional Government of Free India, describes Rashbehari Bose as follows: 'Can you imagine the impossible combination of Al Capone, Saint Aurobindo, Prince Konoye and your favourite uncle, That's Rashbehari Bose for you' (quoted in Hauner 1982: 489).
58. IOR L/WS/1/1579 (*Hindustan Times* 1945).
59. Unpublished Manuscript of Mohan Singh, pp. 5–6 (quoted in Lebra 1972: 90).
60. (i) IOR, L/WS/2/46: A brief chronological and factual account of the INA, 1946.
    (ii) Even the Japanese commentators mentioned that there was 'a fraction that arose between the INA and the Japanese Army which eventually developed into the ouster and arrest of General Mohan Singh', Interview with Mr Juich Nakamura, interpreter to the Foreign Affairs Department of the Formasan Governor-General (Hayashida 1970: 155).
61. IOR L/WS/1/1576: Subversive activities directed against the Indian Army: Note, General Staff Branch, New Delhi, 18 March 1943.
62. IOR L/WS/1/1579 (*Hindustan Times* 1945).
63. (i) IOR, L/WS/1/1576: Note on the recent activities of Bose, 14 July 1943.
    (ii) IOR, L/WS/2/45: A brief chronological and factual account of the INA at its second phase, June 1943–August 1945.
64. Bose's remarks at a press conference on 19 June 1943 (Bose 1965: 190–92).
65. Jawaharlal Nehru at a press conference in Delhi on 5 October 1938, *National Herald*, Delhi.
66. Jawaharlal Nehru at a press conference in Delhi on 13 April 1942, *National Herald*, Delhi.
67. Bose's broadcast, in Bose (1970: 56).
68. IOR, L/WS/1/1576: Telegram from Fiji to the Secretary of State, London, 14 February 1944.
69. IOR, L/WS/1/1576: Telegram from Fiji to the Secretary of State London, 29 February 1944.
70. The government of India apprehended a revolt in Bengal (Mihir Bose 1982: 235).
71. Fujiwara characterised Bose thus (quoted in Toye 1959: 177).
72. *Azad Hind*, 6 November 1944 (quoted in Lebra 1972: 191).
73. IOR, L/WS/1/1576: Mohan Singh's handwritten note, 'Soldiers Contribution to India's Independence'.
74. A. Hasan told M. Sivaram, the journalist, that Bose would like Indians there to address Subhas as 'Netaji. 'The role of India's Fuhurer is just what Subhas Chandra Bose will and fill' (Sivaram 1967: 123, 123–24).
75. See confidential report of Sir J. Colville to Viscount Wavell numbered, L/P&J/5/167: ff 158–62, in Mansergh and Moon (1976: 1079).
76. See confidential report of Sir J. Colville to Viscount Wavell numbered, L/P&J/5/167: ff 158–62, in Mansergh and Moon (1976: 1083).

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15 Landmarks in Constitutional Development During British Rule: A Historical Perspective

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand the reforms as introduced by the Morley–Minto and Montague–Chelmsford proposals.
- To explain the contributions of Simon Commission and Cripps Mission.
- To elucidate the comprehensive reforms brought about by the Government of India Act 1935.

Colonialism expanded its control in India in two distinct ways. First, by tactfully following the divisive *divide-et-impera* strategy which created and sustained the schism between the two major communities of Hindus and Muslims. The British strategy worked favourably because of the socio-economic differences that separated these two communities. In course of time, the divide and rule formula not only consolidated the British rule in India, it also created conditions for the politically underprivileged sections to rise as meaningful partners in governance. So, it cut both ways: on the one hand, the chasm between communities, based on genuine socio-economic differences as well, made the task of governance easier for the ruler; this also, on the other hand, led to a process whereby the peripheral communities became a powerful political voice in the nationalist struggle for independence. Second, drawn on the classical liberal–democratic tradition, the British rule introduced several legal steps to consolidate the empire by gradually opening up administration to the Indians. Along with the application of force, the British government also adopted various reform schemes to inject constitutional values that shaped the nationalist campaign to a significant extent. It will, therefore, not be incorrect to suggest that the British rule survived in India with least coercion because of the role of Indian collaborators in defending the empire. Except in context of the 1942 open rebellion, the collaborative network of support had never shown signs of

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collapse. The adoption of various reforms by the British government created conditions in which Indians felt attached with the imperial rule which finally disintegrated due to its internal contradictions and also the growing nationalist consolidation opposed to foreign rule. Focussing on the landmark constitutional designs during the British rule, this chapter is an analytical statement on the British politico-legal strategies to consolidate the Raj. These designs, undoubtedly concessions to the ruled, were also devices to weaken the nationalist agitation as and when it became a serious threat to the government. In other words, while the British liberal tradition may have contributed to constitutional reforms, one cannot deny the growing strength of the nationalist campaign, Gandhian or otherwise, that forced the British to introduce measures to defuse crisis.

ACTS AND REFORMS: MORLEY–MINTO AND MONTAGUE–CHELMSFORD REFORMS

The most distinctive Act that radically altered the nature of British rule in India was the Act of 1858 which brought the East India Company's century-old rule to an end. The Act provided for the enhanced membership of the Councils. It was mandatory for the government to consult the representative bodies and institutions, approved by the government, before selecting nominees for the Councils. Besides legislative powers, the Councils were also empowered to pull the Executive on financial matters, though it had no power to either revise or reject decisions on this matter. However, the growing weightage of the Councils is indicative of a sea change in the colonial rule. As Morley, Secretary of State, articulated,

> ...there are two rival schools of thought, one of which believes that better government of India depends on efficiency, and that efficiency is, in fact, the end of British rule in India. The other school, while not neglecting efficiency, looks also to what is called political concessions. (quoted in Pylee 1965: 68)

This declaration laid the foundational principles of British administration in India. As a first step, a Royal Commission was

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appointed in 1907 to look into the administration that seemed to have lost its viability in the context of growing discontent among the ruled. The aim of the Commission was to provide an administration which was adapted to the changed social, economic and political realities of India. While recommending the corrective measures, the Commission was guided by the following factors: (*a*) the difficulties of ruling the vast subcontinent from a single headquarter and the inevitable failure of the statesmanship and efficiency in administration; (*b*) the difficulties of applying uniform schemes of development for the provinces which are socio-culturally diverse; (*c*) to instil a sense of responsibility among those engaged in provincial and local administration; and (*d*) to strengthen the colonial rule by educating people in the values of strong administration. On the basis of the recommendation of the Commission, a Bill was introduced in 1908, which became the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms. As a political scheme seeking to strengthen colonial rule in India, the 1909 Act introduced a profound change with long term effects in the representation of communities in Councils. Once the Muslim League was founded in 1906, there were demands for separate electorate for Muslims. In his plea to the Governor General, the Muslim League chief, Aga Khan defended separate electorate for Muslims on the basis of their numerical strength, political importance and contribution that they made 'to the defence of the Empire'. Endorsing the argument, Minto assured Aga Khan that Muslims 'may rest assured that their political rights will be safeguarded' (Pylee 1965: 68). So, the 1909 Act is remarkable in the history of representation in India. Muslims were recognised as a separate community and their electoral rights were also guaranteed accordingly. The British policy of 'divide and rule' was thus formally articulated. Public administration continued to remain partisan for obvious reasons. Meanwhile, the nationalist movement gained momentum and the political atmosphere in India changed. The 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms failed to address genuine grievances of the ruled. Various other Acts were enacted to reinforce the repressive system of governance that was articulated by the 1909 Reform scheme.

With the outbreak of the First World War, a change in the attitude of the British government was visible which was largely 'strategic' to solicit the support of Indians in its war effort. The result was the adoption of the 1919 Montague-Chelmsford Reform scheme which

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was guided by the committed goal of the government to increase association of the Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions in India. On the surface, the Reform scheme appears to be novel and drew on the commitment to make public administration India-friendly, as the three major principles that formed the core of the scheme, suggest:

1. There should be, as far as possible, complete popular control in local bodies and the largest possible independence for them of outside control.
2. The provinces are the domain in which the earlier steps towards the progressive realisation of responsible government should be taken. Some measures of responsibility should be given at once, and the aim of the British government is to provide complete responsibility to the Indians in their governance to the extent possible under the present circumstances.
3. The Government of India must remain wholly responsible to the Parliament and saving such responsibility, its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable, pending experience of the effect of changes now to be introduced in the provinces. Meanwhile, the Indian legislative council should be enlarged and made more representative and its influence in the processes of policy making needs to be enhanced.

There is no denying that the 1919 Act was a politically appropriate strategy in a context when the nationalist movement was growing in importance, especially after the arrival of Gandhi on the scene. Although the administration was guided by the colonial spirit, the British rulers provided a new design of public administration in India by involving loyalist Indians in the governance. In the new dispensation, structural changes in the administration were made. The most remarkable step was the adoption of dyarchy. Dyarchy was an administrative device that demarcated functions between those that were to be given to popular control and those which continue to remain with the British rulers: the former were called 'transferred subjects' and the latter 'reserved subjects'. The Governor-General-in-Council was in charge of the reserved subjects while Governors, acting with ministers in the provinces, remained supreme in so far as the transferred subjects were concerned.

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Despite being unique, the dyarchy was doomed to fail simply because of its ideological roots in colonialism. Even the Alexander Muddieman-led committee, which was constituted to examine the functioning of dyarchy, concluded that it crumbled because of its inherent weaknesses and dissensions due to the following factors: (*a*) the demarcation of authorities between reserved and transferred was meaningless since the *de facto* power always rested with the former; (*b*) as a result, there was hardly an effective dialogue between the provincial ministers and the Governors or the Governor General; (*c*) the Indian ministers were further handicapped since the Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers hardly cooperated with them, and (*d*) the excessive control by the finance department of the Government of India over the transferred subjects.

As evident, attempts were constantly made to accommodate Indians in the governance. This was a strategic device to address the resentment among the ruled that worked favourably, at least at the outset, to contain the nationalist agitation. Although the actual power rested with the British authority, dyarchy was a critical step towards administrative devolution that radically altered the complexion of British power in India which largely revolved around the Governor-General-in-Council. Dyarchy empowered the Governors who exercised independence in regard to transferred subjects in the provinces. Furthermore, the involvement of Indian ministers had introduced changes, though cosmetic in character, in public administration. Apart from gaining experience in administration, the Indian ministers acquired first-hand knowledge of how the administration functioned in most partisan manner. This helped them articulate a nationalist agenda which was now readily acceptable to the people at large since it was experience-based. So, dyarchy was very critical in conceptualising the changing nature of public administration in British India, at least in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

THE SIMON COMMISSION

The appointment of the Simon Commission was a political strategy to divert attention away from the nationalist resentment due largely to the failure of the Government of India Act 1919 to provide a responsible government. Headed by John Simon, the Commission

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with seven members was appointed in 1927 to enquire into the possibilities for further reform in India. Outlining the task for the Commission, the parliamentary declaration thus elaborates that a seven-member Commission with John Simon as its chairman was appointed to:

> ... enquire into the working of the system of government, the growth of education, and the developments of representative institutions in British India, and matters connected therewith and to report as to whether and to what extent it is desirable to establish the principle of responsible government, or to extend, modify, or restrict therein, including the question whether the establishment of second chamber is or is not desirable.[1]

The Commission had a three-fold task: (*a*) to assess the functioning of the system of government that evolved out of the 1919 Government of India Act; (*b*) to ascertain whether the representative institutions were strong enough to establish a responsible government; and (*c*) to judge whether the second chamber was desirable or not.

As Indians were excluded from the Commission, most of the political organisations, including the Indian National Congress (INC), decided to boycott the commission. Constituted solely by the British members of the House of Commons and Lords, the Commission was a clear 'negation of imperial promises of consultation with Indians and their incorporation into the decision-making process' (Brown 1985: 256). Indians were only to give evidence to the Commission that was finally responsible to report to the British Parliament for its decisions about India's future. Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State, defended the exclusion because Indians were quite incapable of agreeing on a workable political framework. This provoked mass protest all over the country and as a result, the Commission failed to collect enough evidence to suggest an effective political formula. A large number of Congressmen, several splinter groups belonging to various Hindu communal outfits, liberals and also a significant section of the Muslim League, led by M.A. Jinnah, decided to boycott the Commission. The Simon report, insisting on making the Governor General stronger than earlier, was immediately rejected by the nationalist opinion irrespective of political

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differences. Condemning the recommendations, nationalist Shaffad Ahmed Khan thus argued that the Commission:

> ... recommended for a Governor-General who would have become more powerful than Shah Jehan and more irresponsible than Shah Alam. The American conception of irresponsible executive was transplanted in a country which had been cradled in the Parliamentary system and nourished on English constitutionalism. It was not a constitutional scheme which deserved any detailed examination but a jig-saw puzzle and few Indians were capable of appreciating its Chinese mysteries.[2]

Despite having provoked mass protest, as the Commission was greeted with the 'Go Back Simon' slogan as soon as its members arrived in Bombay, the recommendations were certainly a step ahead in creating a federal arrangement for colonial India. By suggesting the reorganisation of British Indian provinces, the Commission unleashed a process that loomed large in the days to come. Although these recommendations were governed by imperial considerations, the idea of bifurcating large states and also to dissociate Burma from India as a separate crown colony was welcomed for better governance. Furthermore, by taking into account the princely states, the Commission sought to redefine the contour of the emerging nation that, so far, was confined to British India. The commission seemed to have signalled a process whereby the princely states emerged critical to the British political agenda. It was, therefore, emphatically argued that the princely states:

> ... are not British territory and their subjects are not British subjects. The relations between each of them and the Paramount Power may be ascertained or deduced from Treaty or other written document, or usage and agreement; but however that may be, the Crown is, in each case, responsible for the state's external relations and its territorial integrity.[3]

This statement reconfirms that princely states, despite being autonomous, remained extremely vulnerable and their existence was highly dependent on British support. There were two serious consequences of this statement: on the one hand, this created space for rulers of several princely states to initiate dialogues with the nationalist forces, particularly the Congress, to consolidate their opposition against the British; this gave the nationalists, on the

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other hand, an opportunity to expand their influences beyond the border of British India. It was not, therefore, surprising that at the 1929 Lahore Congress, the princes were called upon to grant responsible government to the ruled.

The all-white Simon Commission was a watershed in India's freedom struggle for three specific reasons. First, it provoked massive nationalist protest all over the country. Besides 'Go Back Simon' demonstrations, showing black flags and observing *hartal*s in various cities, the 1928 anti-Simon protest was 'marked by the beginnings of a renewed movement for boycott of British goods' (Sarkar 1989: 265). Simon was greeted by countrywide *hartal*s on 3 February, the day he reached. His team confronted massive demonstrations on 19 February when they arrived in Calcutta. Second, the call for the boycott of British goods was not only a great success in the city but also forged unity among Hindus and Muslims. A major clash with the police at Lahore on 30 October injured Lajpat Rai who succumbed to death on 17 November. Third, on the whole, the anti-Simon campaign was, therefore, the occasion for the articulation of nationalist protest in an unprecedented way. The Congress renewed its campaign against vested interests. Vallabhbhai Patel, one of Gandhi's trusted lieutenants, launched a *satyagraha* campaign in Bardoli against the imposition of land revenue at a time when the cultivation was hard-hit due to the lack of adequate monsoon. There was an epidemic of strikes involving jute, textile and railway workers. Led by the Workers' and Peasants' party, thousands of jute workers of Bengal marched into the 1928 annual session of the Congress and disrupted the deliberations demanding *purna swaraj*. The Bombay textile workers were mobilised by the Textile Labour Union against wage-cuts. In Jamshedpur, the steel workers, led by the local leadership with support from the Congress, forced the management of Tata Iron and Steel Company to concede some of their demands. Revolutionary activities were vigorously undertaken by several splinter groups in Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. The most important group was certainly the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) that struck the headlines for sustained revolutionary activities involving the youth. The HSRA lost its momentum with the arrest of its leader, Bhagat Singh and his associates. This followed a series of bomb blasts in Punjab; an attempt to blow up the train

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carrying Lord Irwin, the Viceroy; throwing of bombs in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and assassination of the district magistrate, Saunders, in revenge for the death of Lajpat Rai who succumbed to injuries that he received in a police lathi charge while peacefully protesting against the Simon Commission. The third consequence was no less insignificant. Lord Birkenhead's statement that Indians were incapable of working for an agreeable political framework, provoked the Congress to take initiative for drafting a constitution for the country. The 1928 All-Parties Conference appointed a small committee with Motilal Nehru as the chairman and seven other members: Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.S. Aney, Sardar Mangal Singh, Shuaib Qureshi, Subhas Chandra Bose and G.R. Pradhan. It was a committee based on a consensus among the participants in the conference, as the composition clearly demonstrates. The Motilal Nehru Committee is illustrative of the extent to which nationalism cemented a bond among those opposed to British rule. This was also a powerful nationalist statement challenging Lord Birkenhead. So the constitution-drafting was not merely a technical exercise, it was also an articulation of the nationalist protest in perhaps the most creative fashion.

The report of the Simon Commission remains 'a monument to a conservative strategy for imperial control' (Brown 1985: 256), whereas the Motilal Nehru Committee report was the first nationalist draft of a constitution for independent India. Primarily the work of two eminent jurists of the period, T.B. Sapru and Motilal Nehru, the Nehru Report proposed that:

> ... India shall have the same constitutional status in the comity of nations known as the British empire, as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Union of South Africa and the Irish Free State, with a Parliament having powers to make laws for the peace, order and good government of India and an executive responsible to that Parliament, and shall be styled and known as the Commonwealth of India.[4]

As evident, the Report demanded dominion status for India just like other white self-governing dominions within the British empire. Vesting the executive authority in the King, the Report also recommended a constitutional arrangement for uniting the princely states with the British Indian provinces. The status of the

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provinces was to remain the same and the residual powers were vested in the central government; this provoked protest even among those sympathetic to the Report. The Nehru Committee revised the 1916 Lucknow agreement with Muslims and endorsed the principle of joint electorate for the House of Representatives at the central and the provincial legislatures. There would, however, be no reservation of seats except for Muslims in those provinces where they were in a minority and non-Muslims in the North West Frontier Province. This also suggests that reservation for Muslims in Bengal and Punjab where they constituted a majority was completely ruled out.

As soon as the details of the Report were made public, the differences of opinion rapidly surfaced. Muslims parted ways since they were denied constitutional guarantee against a possible Hindu-dominated hegemonic state. Even Jinnah who appreciated Motilal's effort in drafting a constitution for united India rejected the Report demanding that the residual powers should rest with the provinces rather than the centre to scuttle the rise of a unitary and authoritarian Hindu-dominated state. Other Muslim groups joined hands and in January 1929, an All Parties Muslim Conference met in Delhi and agreed to abandon the Report that hardly addressed the Muslim concern. While Muslims dissociated from the Report as it was far from their expectations, there were dissidents even within the Congress. Led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, a powerful faction within the Congress formed the Independence India League that demanded complete independence rather than dominion status as suggested by the Nehru Committee. While elucidating the difference between dominion status and independence, Nehru (1941: 418) stated that dominion status 'envisages the same old structure, with many bonds visible and invisible tying us to the British economic system: [complete freedom] gives, or ought to give us, freedom to erect a new structure to suit our circumstances.' Critical of those defending the dominion status, Nehru (ibid.: 417) further argued,

> ...for them the problem is one of changing colour of administration, or at most having a new administration ... [and] not a new state.… They can only conceive of a future in which, they or people like them will play the principal role and take the place of the English high officials.

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The 1928 Calcutta Congress thus saw an open split between those who defended dominion status and those who advocated complete independence. Two groups agreed to cooperate once the president of the session, Motilal Nehru, devised a formula for reconciliation by suggesting that if the Report was not accepted by the British Parliament by 31 December 1929, the Congress was free to adopt the complete independence pledge and to organise non-violent non-cooperation to achieve it. It was more or less a foregone conclusion that in view of the growing importance of the radical section within the Congress, it had no alternative but to insist on complete independence. With the acceptance of the complete independence resolution in the 1929 Lahore Congress, it was decided to boycott the legislature and the Congress members were asked to resign. Furthermore, the All India Congress Committee was authorised to launch civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes wherever it deemed appropriate. Gandhi rose as the undisputed leader and was made the sole authority to decide the time and manner of the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935

Colonialism and centralisation of power seem to go hand in hand, though administration in British India underwent changes at least in its content. A change is visible if one follows the evolution of the British Indian state since the adoption of the 1772 Regulating Act. Perhaps the most (and last) significant constitutional measure in India during the British rule is the Government of India Act, 1935 that drew on the inputs from the Indian Statutory Commission, the All Parties Conference, the Round Table Conferences and the Joint Parliamentary Committee of the British Parliament. Seeking to establish a federal form of government in which the constituent provinces had autonomous legislative and executive powers, the Act paved the way for a parliamentary form of government in which the executive was made accountable within certain bounds to the legislature. This was also a major experiment in the devolution of power within, of course, the imperial parameters. As the then Viceroy, Linlithgow commented, 'after all we framed the constitution ... of 1935 because we thought it the way ... to hold India to the empire' (quoted in Bandyopadhyay 2004: 326).

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Although the well-espoused federation never came into being, the Act was nonetheless a powerful comment against the integrated administrative system of the colonial variety. A perusal of the Act draws our attention to the following features:

1. Provincial autonomy was recognised by giving the provinces a separate legal identity and liberating them from central control except for certain specific purposes.
2. A federation of India was established demarcating domains between the provincial governments and the federal central government.
3. Dyarchy, discontinued in the provinces, was introduced at the centre. Subjects of foreign affairs and defence were 'reserved' to the control of the Governor General; the other central subjects were transferred to ministers subject to 'safeguards' in the provinces.
4. The federal principle was recognised in the formation of the lower house of the central legislature, though the Governor General remained the *de facto* ruler.
5. Separate electorate was retained following the distribution of seats among the minority communities, as devised by the 1932 Communal or MacDonald Award.

The Act was undoubtedly a strategic response to the growing popular resentment against the British rule in India in the context of the war crisis. It was possible that the Act was an outcome of political calculations to win over Indian support for the British war effort. Nonetheless, the Act provided an arrangement whereby ministers were entrusted with specific responsibilities in which they remained supreme, though the Governor was given special responsibilities to be discharged in his individual capacity and was also empowered with certain discretionary functions. In case of failure of constitutional machinery, the Governor was constitutionally authorised to take over the administration and suspend provincial autonomy if he deemed appropriate. As evident, the Act allowed provincial autonomy only within the parameters set by the British government. Yet, the 1935 Act was a significant constitutional step towards building India in a federal setup.

That the Act was basically an imperialist design is evident from the constitutionally guaranteed powers and immunities of the

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Governor General. The role of this highest executive authority was indeed unique. He had a dual role. As the Governor General of British India, he remained supreme in so far as constitutional authority was concerned. For the princely states, he was in charge of the use of the Royal Prerogative and paramount authority that upheld imperial control beyond the border of British India. The scheme was constitutionally most appropriate from the point of view of the British government since it bestowed complete authority in one institution. In fact, the arrangement was also a convenient device to wrest control from elected representatives as soon as it was required. So, the federal distribution of power that the Act stipulated was heavily tilted in favour of the central authority, namely, the Governor General, which itself suggests that the guarantee of provincial autonomy was possibly a politically expedient device to address the nationalist resentment in a very clever way.

It would, however, be wrong to dismiss the Act as exemplary of a clear imperialist design, since it unleashed a process towards provincial autonomy while responding to the long-standing nationalist demand for sharing power. Introduction of provincial autonomy enabled the Indian ministers to directly involve in administration, though they had to function under the overall restriction of colonialism. Hence, it was characterised as 'a gigantic Constitutional facade without anything substantial within it' (Coupland 1944: 238). The Act was also a sign of the determination of the British government to warp the Indian question towards electoral politics. By involving Indians in administration, the Act had brought more players in the arena of public administration. There is no doubt that the Act introduced Indian politicians to the world of parliamentary politics and, as a result of the new arrangement stipulated by the Act, politics now percolated down to the localities which largely remained peripheral so far. The available evidence also suggests that the Act was the price the British paid for the continuity of the Empire. What thus appears to be a calculated generous gesture was very much a politically expedient step. In fact, the surrender of power, though at the regional levels, caused consternation among the votaries of the British power in India who saw an eclipse of British authority in this endeavour.

The Act had 'more enemies than friends', argued V.P. Menon (1963: 54), who played a crucial role in the transfer of power. Its federal design was condemned by almost all political parties, with the

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exception of the National Liberal Party and Hindu Mahasabha. The Congress articulated its opposition in its Faizpur meeting of 1936 by attacking the proposed safeguards and the Governor General's overriding powers. The Congress also resolved to combat the Act both inside and outside the legislature before it was implemented. Nonetheless, the Congress finally agreed to contest the forthcoming election possibly as a strategy to gain as much as possible by being part of the government. Likewise, the Muslim League justified its participation in the election as possibly the best option under the prevalent conditions, despite having condemned the Act as inadequate to establishing 'responsible government'.

Elections to the provincial legislature were held in early 1937. The Congress won a clear majority in Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Orissa. In Bombay, it succeeded in winning half of the seats in the provincial legislature and formed the government with the support of a few sympathisers. In Assam and North West Frontier Province, the Congress emerged as the single largest party. In Bengal and Punjab, the Congress failed miserably, and the victory of two regional parties—Krishak Praja Party in Bengal and Unionist Party in Punjab—had also shown the failure of the Congress to strike roots in these two Muslim-majority states. While in Bengal, the Krishak Praja Party formed the government after an alliance with the Muslim League, the Sikander Hyat Khan-led Unionist Party constituted the government on its own.

The initial euphoria over the acceptance of office was, however, short-lived because of the ingrained constraints of working under the overriding imperial authority. One is, however, baffled because most political parties, despite condemning the Act from the very outset, participated in the elections and joined the government most enthusiastically. In other words, how could the parties committed to freedom and bitterly critical of the Act agree to work within its framework? This was a paradox of the period that was finally resolved 28 months after the Congress had taken over power in the provinces, when the Congress ministries resigned in protest against the reluctance of the British government to spell-out its war aim, including the freedom of the colonies. The Act did not survive enough to fulfil its desired goal, given the outbreak of the Second World War which 'did not give time to its sponsors to stage even a decent burial' (Menon 1963: 57). Nevertheless, the 1935 Government of India Act was perhaps the most elaborate

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constitutional scheme during the British rule that by devising provisions for provincial autonomy sought to tackle the difficulties of governing a highly complex society like India. What is striking about the Act is that it is not only a well-articulated response to India's political diversity, but also the last serious effort to sustain imperial control within the broad liberal parameters of Westminster parliamentary democracy. It is, therefore, not surprising that the founding fathers while drafting the Constitution could not afford to ignore the Act, notwithstanding their critical opposition when it was introduced by the imperial ruler. This itself is an eloquent testimony of the constitutional validity of some of the sections of the 1935 Act that reappeared in free India's 1950 Constitution either in spirit or letter. The explanation lies in the very nature of India's socio-political circumstances that remained more or less the same, if not worse, because of the bloodbath following the 1947 partition. The constitution-makers were drawn to the Act possibly to articulate their response to the extraordinary circumstances in which the constitutional machinery completely broke down. In this sense, the Act provided critical inputs to those who presided over India's destiny in the Constituent Assembly at a critical juncture of her rise as a free nation.

THE CRIPPS MISSION

The war crisis created circumstances in which the British government was forced to negotiate with nationalist forces in India. With the Japanese conquest of Singapore in February and Rangoon in March 1942, Indian political situation changed dramatically. Following the rapid Japanese advance in 1941–42, it was believed that 'India's safeguard in the war ... was lost. After the fall of Singapore, the Bay of Bengal lay open. When Rangoon fell, it seemed as if the tide of Japanese conquest would soon be sweeping into Bengal and Malabar' (Coupland 1944: 263). Not only was there preparation for evacuation of the British, the Government of India issued an order to the effect that 'in the event of Bengal being overrun by the Japanese, all officers of District rank and below in all departments were to remain at their posts to administer the district for the good of the people under the control of the enemy' (Taylor 1941: 5–6). With increasing military preparedness in view of the

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impending Japanese attack, the India Office felt obliged to make some gesture to win over Indian public opinion. The Viceroy did not agree to this idea because, in his views, 'they [Indian politicians] are entirely ruthless ... and any further move at this stage will not likely to improve India's contribution to the war' (Mansergh et al. 1970: 23). Nonetheless, the political initiative came from the British Parliament in the form of Cripps Mission, under the leadership of the Labour leader of the House of Commons, Stafford Cripps, who arrived in India in March 1942 with the task of exploring the possibilities of a political accord between the British, the League and Congress. Stafford Cripps was chosen because of the high esteem in which he was held in Britain and India, and also because of his intimacy with Nehru. The plan that Cripps carried with him included immediate transformation of India, as soon as the war ended, into a self-governing dominion with a clause conceding the secession of the provinces that aimed at placating the Muslim League. The main features of the scheme that Cripps offered for negotiation with the Congress, Muslim League and other political parties in India are:

1. The object of His Majesty's Government was the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion in the British Commonwealth but in no way subordinate to Britain in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.
2. Immediately upon cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India an elected body for framing a new constitution for India.
3. Provision shall be made for the participation of the princely Indian states in the constitution-making body.
4. Any province that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position was to be allowed to have a Constitution of its own with the same status as the Indian Union.

Despite the differences of opinion between the Secretary of the state and the Viceroy, the agreement on the appointment of the Cripps Mission was clinched largely due to international pressure. The United States President, Franklin D. Roosevelt touched on India's political future in his meeting with the British premier, Winston Churchill in December 1941. Chiang-Kai-Shek during his

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trip to India publicly expressed sympathy for 'India's aspiration for freedom' adding that Britain would as speedily as possible give 'real political power' to the Indian people. Winston Churchill responded to the international demand by suggesting a new policy for India that runs as follows:

> After the war, [the British Government] would work out a new constitution for India. Its main conclusions on the constitution would be (in the nature and procedure for reaching them) an expression of the desire of the people of India as a whole. His majesty's government would accept a constitution so arrived at and would negotiate with the Council in regard to the fulfillment of British obligations.[5]

That the declaration by Churchill was a strategic attempt to convince the Allied Partners was confirmed by L.S. Amery, Secretary of State, who unambiguously stated that the decision to send the Cripps Mission:

> ... is to answer the charge that our policy in India is inconsistent with our general profession about fighting for freedom as well as the even more humiliating charge that if we are prepared to make concession to India now, it is simply the result of a decadent imperialism realising that the game is up.[6]

The announcement of the Cripps Mission was thus a politically expedient decision to avoid further dent on the British liberal image. However, the draft declaration was certainly a positive drive towards resolving the constitutional deadlock by promising dominion status with the right of secession, a constitution-making body elected by the provincial legislatures, with individual provinces being given the right not to join it and with princely states being invited to appoint representatives.[7] Linlithgow, the Viceroy, threatened to resign[8] because he was unhappy with the draft declaration which was, he felt, unwarranted during the war crisis. His resignation was not accepted and Churchill convinced Linlithgow by drawing his attention to the effect that the appointment of the Cripps Mission had on the world opinion, especially the Americans by arguing that,

> ...it would be impossible owing to unfortunate rumours and publicity, and the general American outlook, to stand on a purely negative attitude and the Cripps Mission is indispensable to prove our

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honesty of purpose.… If it is rejected by the Indian parties ... our sincerity will be proved to the world.[9]

The Cripps Mission was finally withdrawn for not adequately consulting the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Wavell, who expressed concern that Cripps was conceding far too real power to the Congress.[10] The negotiation finally failed over the Congress insistence that Executive Council of the Governor General needed to be replaced by a National Government. Cripps was unable to accept the demand because it meant constitutional amendment that was impossible during war time. He tried to persuade the Congress to accept the prevalent constitutional arrangement as 'absolutely temporary' to which the Congress did not subscribe. This was the last nail in the coffin and the Mission was withdrawn. As evident in contemporary research, Churchill was not keen on its success and sought to sabotage the Cripps effort from the outset. He was afraid that there might be an agreement that would commit the British to withdraw after the war. As soon as he found out that the Congress was insisting on its participation in the wartime government in India, the British Prime Minister immediately sent a telegram to Cripps asking him not to make any commitment regarding the participation of the Indians in the government. The intransigence of Viceroy, Linlithgow, proved convenient to Churchill. Stafford Cripps found no support from within the government and the Mission was inevitably withdrawn.[11] In fact, as V.P. Menon informs, Churchill made it abundantly clear in his speech in the House of Commons that 'His Majesty's Government had not been willing to support Sir Stafford Cripps to the extent to which he himself was prepared to go' (Menon 1963: 136). That the appointment of the Cripps Mission was a mere strategy to win the support of the British allies was evident when Churchill congratulated Stafford Cripps on his success in 'proving how great was the British desire to reach a settlement.… The effect throughout and in the United States has been wholly beneficial'.[12] The effort was, therefore, a part of the British propaganda, the aim of which was to address the concern of the Allied Partners. The argument gained acceptance as Churchill himself declared in November 1942 that 'I have not become King's first minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British empire'.[13] It is, therefore, difficult not to suspect, as

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Sumit Sarkar argued, 'an element of bluff and double-dealing here so far as the British were concerned, though opinions may well differ as to whether Cripps himself was a willing or unconscious agent in this game' (Sarkar 1989: 388).

Stafford Cripps came to India on 22 March and left for England on 12 April. The fate of the Mission was thus sealed in just three weeks time. Despite his genuine concern for India's freedom, he failed to convince either the Congress or the Muslim League or his colleagues in the India Office in London. When he returned to England, he was a frustrated soul that came out in his statement that 'we have tried by the offer that I brought to help India along her road to victory and to freedom. But, for the moment, past distrust has proved too strong to allow of present agreement' (quoted in Menon 1963: 135). The abrupt withdrawal of the Mission and the sudden departure of Cripps led to various kinds of speculation and conjecture. The Congress was persuaded to believe that 'Cripps deceived them in the interests of British propaganda in America' (Mansergh et al. 1970: 682). The Muslim League was not enthusiastic from the outset because the Cripps suggestion for sharing power with the Congress was a critical step to 'stifle in advance its ambition for a separate Muslim state' (ibid.: 121). Cripps was also criticised for being a 'hypocrite' because whenever there was a definite agreement on practical details on the basis of certain principles, he always dithered and withdrew his support despite being committed to those principles at the outset. The contemporary press attributed the breakdown of the Cripps negotiation to the intransigent attitude of those who mattered in the India Office in London. The British authority was not willing to part with the empire in India, as the argument goes, and the Cripps Mission was eyewash to placate the international opinion condemning the His Majesty's government for its vicious role in India. On the whole, the Cripps Mission became a suspect and instead of bringing the government and nationalist forces together for an amicable solution to constitutional impasse, the Mission served to make the gulf unbridgeable. The manner in which the negotiations collapsed tended to strengthen the doubts and suspicion in the minds of Indian nationalists that 'there was no genuine desire on the part of the His Majesty's Government to part with power' (ibid.: 138).

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The Cripps Mission failed to weld the Congress into collaborative network, and its rejection by the leadership led to open confrontation with the government in the Quit India Movement. Its appointment might have placated the opinion outside India, though from the British point of view, it was a hasty and ill-conceived attempt that seemed to have exposed how vulnerable the British government in India was during the war. Gandhi thus characterised the Cripps proposal as 'a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank' (quoted in Pylee 1965: 12). It seems that it also suited Gandhi who, convinced that the British found themselves in a very difficult position, 'was now all set for a fight' (Markovitz 2002: 385). The outcome was the Quit India call on 9 August 1942. The British government in India became helpless as the Quit India Movement gained momentum. Characterising the Cripps offer as 'that point at which the British departure after the war became inevitable', Judith Brown thus argues that 'a hasty and ill-conceived attempt in large part designed to placate opinion outside India as well as to attract Indian politicians' cooperation at one of the war's darkest hours became the charter for India's freedom' (Brown 1985: 318).

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

An uncritical look at these selective, but major, landmark constitutional initiatives during the colonial rule may lead one to conclude that these were initiated by the British for the Indians. Hence, the spirit of nationalism is underrated. If one goes beyond the surface, what is evident is that the inclusion of Indians in administration was, but an outcome of the British effort to defuse popular discontent. Hence, the argument that every constitutional drive was initiated by the Raj is totally unfounded. History reveals that there were situations which forced the British authority to adopt measures to control agitation. For instance, the Congress campaign in the 1880s contributed a lot to the introduction of the 1893 reforms. Behind the 1909 Morley–Minto Reforms lay the *swadeshi* movement and revolutionary terrorism. Similarly, the 1919 Montague–Chelmsford Reforms were attempts at resolving crises that began with the Home Rule League and climaxed with the 1919 Rowlatt *satyagraha*

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and the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1910–21. To a large extent, the Gandhian Civil Disobedience Movement (1930–32) accounted for the introduction of constitutional measures seeking to involve Indian politicians in public administration.

Furthermore, the interpretation of these constitutional designs remains partial unless linked with the broader socio-economic and political processes in which they were conceptualised. An attempt to analyse the structure and dynamics of constitutional politics without reference to the broader social matrix and economic nexus is futile because the politico-constitutional structure reflects economic and social networks, religio-cultural beliefs and even the nationalist ideology which impinged on the organised world of administrative and constitutional structure. So an urgent and unavoidable task for an analyst is not to completely ignore the broader socio-economic context but to ascertain its relative importance in shaping a particular constitutional initiative. For instance, the 1932 Communal Award was believed to have been initiated by the British to expand political activity among the Muslims in Bengal and Punjab. But, as studies have shown, it was also a concession the British were forced to grant in order to make maintenance of the Empire easier. The sharing of power with the native elites was thus prompted by considerations other than merely British initiatives.

The evolution of colonialism in India will continue to remain an interesting area for research for a variety of reasons. Prominent among them is certainly the process by which colonialism sustained its grip in India by creating a strong collaborative network and also by successfully pursuing a divide and rule strategy to scuttle efforts at unifying socio-economically separated communities. The strength of British colonialism lies in the fact that unlike their other European counterparts, the British rulers expanded and also maintained their presence not merely by coercion, but also by creating circumstances in which they emerged as the best possible option for the Indians who remained highly divisive due to various socio-economic and political reasons. The constitutional landmarks that we have discussed above are a clear testimony to those imperial efforts that defused opposition rather easily on most occasions. What was distinct about British colonialism was its success in welding a significant section of the population to the system of

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governance that the British introduced. It was possible perhaps due to its triumph in ideologically moulding people towards liberal political values and ethos. Barring the militant nationalists, most of the nationalists were content with the method of three Ps (petition, prayer and protest) until the rise of Gandhi who radically transformed the complexion of anti-British confrontation.

These landmark constitutional experiments had a role in permanently dividing major communities in India on the basis of religion and other socio-economic denominations. Both Hindus and Muslims redefined their identities through a process of contestation of vision, contestation of beliefs and contestation of history. The period between 1909 and 1947, when major constitutional experiments were undertaken, sharply shows the mutation in the formation of Hindus and Muslims as communities opposed to each other in the political arena. What was distinctive about this period was the growth of communities as political units always in a permanent adversarial relationship with the members of the 'other' community. This was further consolidated following the introduction of the communal electorate in the 1937 provincial elections. With the acceptance of the principle of majority, Muslims automatically became the most powerful community in Bengal and Punjab by their sheer demographic strength. In other words, religious identity as a demographic category became probably the single most crucial criterion in determining the distribution of governmental power in these Muslim-majority provinces. The 1935 Government of India Act reiterated the divide and rule strategy by formally recognising that Muslims needed to be treated separately as a distinct, but neglected minority in India. This was a decisive constitutional intervention because not only did it establish the principle of majority as sacrosanct in democracy, it also made Muslims self-conscious of their critical importance in governance in India. It is now possible to argue that the 1935 Act definitely shifted the centre of political activity in Bengal to the east of the province. Not by virtue of any inherent superiority of the Muslims but simply because in a democratically elected legislature, as a contemporary report underlines, 'the weight of numbers tells and the teeming millions of East Bengal—sixty percent of their being Muslims outweighed in point of numbers the more educated Hindus of the South, West and extreme north of the province'.[14] The migration

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of power to the countryside took place in the context of a major realignment in the social bases of political power.

The 1935 Government of India Act was certainly a powerful constitutional intervention that the colonial rulers seriously made to accommodate the nationalist zeal within, of course, the colonial administrative format. This is also illustrative of efforts at legitimising the growing democratic aspirations of the ruled in India through a constitutional device. Interestingly, the 1935 Act remained the strongest influence during the making the 1950 Constitution for free India. Some 250 clauses of the present Constitution were, in fact, lifted from the Government of India Act. Although the political system of independent India draws its sustenance from universal adult franchise and political sovereignty, rules are undoubtedly derived from its colonial past. The most striking provisions that the Constitution of India derived from its 1935 counterpart are the Emergency provisions that enable the President to suspend the democratically elected governments and fundamental rights of the citizens.

There is no doubt that the post-colonial state in India inherited its habits of governance from colonial practices. And, its *weltanschauung* (worldview) is based on 'the mixed legacies of colonial rule' that upheld rule of law, bureaucracy, citizenship, parasitic landlords, modern political institutions and 'two-track tradition of protest and participation' (Mitra 2004: 29–34). What accounts for relative stability of colonialism in India was certainly its ability to adapt to the changed socio-political circumstances and also gradual but steady 'internalisation' of domination by the subjects of colonial rule, which provoked an analyst to characterise colonialism as 'an intimate enemy' (Nandy: 1989) because the dominated saw the virtues of being dominated for their own betterment. Colonialism was thus not seen as an absolute evil but complementary to India's rise as an independent nation in future. The statement may not be politically correct. Nonetheless, it can safely be argued that colonialism provided critical impetus to various processes that finally resulted in serious political mobilisation against imperialism in India. Whether nationalism or democratisation, they had their roots in the long history of colonialism and in this sense, colonialism remained a significant force behind the rise of India as an independent nation in 1947.

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NOTES

1. India Office Records (IOR hereafter), Mss. Eur. C. 231/1 (10): Debates in the House of Lords on the appointment of the Simon Commission, 23 July 1927.
2. Shaffad Ahmed Khan, Indian Federation, 1937 (quoted in Pylee 1965: 90).
3. IOR, Mss. Eur. C. 231/1 (10), Debates in the House of Lords, 22 August 1927.
4. *The Motilal Nehru Report*, August 1928, reproduced in Rao (2004: 59).
5. Winston Churchill's statement, quoted in (Menon 1963: 116).
6. IOR, London, Mss. Eur. F. 125/11, Linlithgow Papers, Amery to Linlithgow, 17 June 1942.
7. For details of the Cripps Mission, see Moore (1979).
8. IOP, London, Mss. Eur. F. 180.9c, Memoirs of WHJ Christie, (an ICS officer working in the Viceroy's office), p. 11.
9. Churchill to Linlithgow, 10 March 1942, in Mansergh et al. (1970: 394–405).
10. A war cabinet telegram to Stafford Cripps, 18 April 1942, in Mansergh et al. (1970: 670).
11. This argument is made by Crispin Bates in his *Subaltern and Raj: South Asia since 1600* (2007: 157).
12. Churchill to Stafford Cripps, 28 April 1942, in Mansergh et al. (1970: 707–08).
13. Winston Churchill speech at the Mansion House, London, 10 November 1942, as reported in the *New York Times* on 11 November 1942, quoted in Bates (2007: 155).
14. IOR, London, Tyson Papers, Eur E. 341/41, John Tyson's note, 5 July 1947.

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16 Socio-economic Dimensions of the Nationalist Movement

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To examine the communal question and the partition of the country.
- To understand the broad contours of the socio-economic movements during the pre-independence times.
- To explore the contribution of the socio-economic movements in shaping the nationalist thought in India.

In the course of the genesis and development of the nationalist movement in the country, two overtly disjointed yet inherently interrelated streams of thought and action seemed to be underpinning the movement throughout its journey. One, undoubtedly, the principal and direct focus of the movement remained centred around the idea of gaining political independence for the country by stirring the political awakening amongst the masses. As a result, the movement gradually grew from one of plea, petition and prayer as practiced by a minuscule section of the western educated elite and liberal intelligentsia of the country, agreeable even to the status of a dominion, to that of a mass movement dominated, if not directed, by the more aggressive, commoner and Indianised band of leaders, ready to accept nothing less than *purna swaraj*. Two, alongside the direct and desired political awakening generated by the nationalist movement, a reinvented form of social and economic awakening also started dawning in the minds of people who aspired to gain not a lopsided but a comprehensive independence for them. Consequently, numerous social and economic movements were also launched in various parts of the country with a view to secure for the people egalitarian social and equitable economic structures upon the attainment of political independence for the country.

The gaining of significance by the various socio-economic movements in the country is reflective of the character of the mainstream nationalist movement on the one hand, and the complex perspectives of the proponents of the socio-economic movements, on the other. Crucially, for the nationalist leaders interested primarily, if not exclusively, in securing the liberation of the country from the

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British colonialism, political independence of India appeared to be the ultimate goal with socio-economic liberation of the masses either finding no place in their scheme of things or standing only in a secondary position to political liberation. Hence, the vigorous attention of nationalist leaders like Gandhi was drawn to the issues of socio-economic emancipation of the people, as in the case of the scheduled castes, only after such issues were poised to rock the vigour of the national movement on the one hand and tear apart the socio-economic fabric of the country on the other. However, what was interesting with regard to the various socio-economic movements was the complexity of each movement in terms of their purpose, methodology, target groups, attitude towards the national movement as well as the British rule, leadership and the final record of their successes and failures. For instance, on the issue of support to the nationalist movement, the contrast in the perspectives of the Dalit movement and the Women's movement was striking, for, while the former took a somewhat ambivalent attitude on supporting the national movement, the attitude of the latter was out and out in supporting the national movement, in addition to espousing the cause of women's emancipation in the main. The chapter, therefore, seeks to provide an analysis of the peculiar features and issues of important socio-economic movements in the country which portray the unconventional dimensions of the nationalist movement in contradistinction to its conventional political dimension.

THE COMMUNAL QUESTION AND PARTITION

Partition is 'the moment of the constitutional establishment of two dominions with accompanying bloodbath' (Pandey 1994: 215). Pressing for a separate Muslim state, the 1940 Lahore resolution was the first official pronouncement of Pakistan or partition by the Muslim League. Though the term 'Pakistan' was nowhere mentioned, by demanding an independent states for Muslims, the resolution translated the goal of a sovereign Muslim state in concrete terms. Furthermore, it argued that Indian Muslims constituted a majority-nation in the north-west and east of India, which ought to be treated at par with the Hindu majority in all future constitutional negotiations.

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The idea contained in the resolution was not novel. Since it was proposed formally in an annual session of the League which 'had, by then, the backing of the Moslem population of India', it was, as Khaliquzzaman (1961) reminisced, 'an avalanche which uprooted all the old fossilised structure of the political shibboleths which had kept the minds of Indian Muslim engaged for about a century, and paved the way for a direct march towards a definite goal.' Writing on this resolution, Edward Benthall, an important member of the Viceroy Council, insisted that 'it would be dangerous to brush Pakistan lightly aside because there is no doubt that the scheme has fired the imagination of millions of Moslems throughout India' (Benthall 1940: 8).[1] Lord Wavell, the Viceroy while endorsing Benthall's assessment, also believed that 'for the mass of Muslims, it is a real possibility and has very strong sentimental appeal.'[2] [Hence] we cannot openly denounce Pakistan until we have something to offer in its place.[3]

Despite doubts on Pakistan's viability, the colonial power became increasingly sensitive to the claims advanced by the Muslim League. By 1945, not only did the League insist on 'the division of India as the only solution of the complex constitutional problem of India',[4] its election campaign was also based on the issue of Pakistan. If Muslims voted in favour of the League in the 1946 elections, 'the League will be entitled to ask for Pakistan without any further investigation or plebiscite.'[5] During the election campaign, Jinnah also identified the areas constituting Pakistan. According to him, those provinces with a clear Muslim majority naturally belonged to Pakistan. Hence, Sind, Baluchistan, North West Frontier Province and Punjab in the north-west, and Bengal and Assam in the north-east of India were provinces earmarked for Pakistan. The forthcoming elections, he declared, 'will decide the matter once for all and when they are over, Pakistan will become an immediate reality'.[6] In Punjab, Jinnah and his League colleagues were reported to have drawn on the religious sentiments of Muslim voters by underlining that 'the question a voter is called on to answer is—are you a true believer or an infidel and a traitor'.[7] As the poll outcome revealed, the 1946 election was a referendum for the League.[8] While in the first provincial poll in 1937, the League failed to make an impact even in the Muslim majority provinces, within nine years, in 1946, it became the only representative of Muslims by polling in

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most, if not all, cases close to its maximum natural strength. This was a remarkable achievement in terms of both leadership and organisation.

An unambiguous verdict in favour of the Muslim League in the Muslim majority provinces in the 1946 elections radically altered India's political landscape in which the League emerged as a stronger party in its negotiations with the British in the last phase of the transfer of power. The idea that Muslims were more than political minority and, in fact, a significant political entity, gained momentum following the resignation of Congress ministries and their refusal to cooperate with the war effort. In that particular context, the League rose stronger in its bargain with the British for 'a parity' with the Congress in future constitutional negotiations. Furthermore, it was also easier for the League to justify its claim as the only organisation to speak on behalf of Indian Muslims following the 1946 poll outcome. Immediately after the results were announced, the League in its April session, therefore, modified the Lahore resolution, which, instead of demanding 'independent states', now argued for 'a sovereign independent Muslim state',[9] presumably to secure the consolidation of a single Muslim constitutional entity. After all, the League demand for parity 'rested on the claim that it represented a cohesive entity known as the Muslim nation'(Shaikh 1986: 547–48). By demanding 'independent states', the Pakistan resolution 'threatened to undermine the idea of Muslim solidarity and with it, the basis of the League's political ideology' (ibid.).

In the penultimate year of the transfer of power, the League secured parity with the Congress and in the 1946 Shimla conference, the League and Congress representation was equated.[10] What came in the form of Lahore resolution became feasible. And, Jinnah's appeal to 'unsettle the settled notions ... of Muslims being a minority [that] had been around for so long'[11] was finally translated into reality. So, not only did the *Quaid-i-Azam* succeed in dramatically altering the role of Muslims in the overall constitutional settlement on the eve of the Great Divide, he also transformed the Muslim community into a nation[12] by ascertaining 'territorial sovereignty to a heterogeneous community turned homogeneous nation' (Jalal 1998: 2185). The Muslim community for Jinnah was, therefore, not

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'an abstract historical-political entity ... but a separate nation with distinct interests [which] could not be treated only as a minority' (Brass 1991: 94).

The consolidation of Muslim communal forces was equally matched, if not surpassed, by the rising tide of Hindu communalism.[13] Especially in the aftermath of Calcutta riot, Hindu communalism grew at an alarming rate resorting to intimidation, coercion and terror. Meetings were organised by Hindu Mahasabha to defuse the drive for Pakistan and its leader B.S. Moonjee (1946a) launched a campaign supporting violence, if necessary, to protect Hindus from communal attack. Its worse form was articulated probably in the 1946 Bihar riot where organised Hindus wiped out Muslim villages in Patna, Gaya and Monghyr districts. Apart from Hindu Mahasabha, which had a direct role, the Congress workers were also reported to have incited riots in many cases. The Bihar riot made the Hindus vulnerable in Bengal and part of Assam where they constituted a minority. What strengthened the movement for partition in Bengal was certainly the feeling that 'Hindus were not safe in the League-ruled Bengal.'[14] The Congress leadership gradually realised that however undesirable the partition of Bengal (and Punjab), there was really no alternative to it. Its reluctance to officially endorse the Mahasabha-sponsored 'communal' campaign for partition alienated a large number of Hindus in rural Bengal. The Congress was identified 'as being incapable of dealing with the Muslim challenge and safeguarding Hindu lives' (Moonjee 1946b). It became increasingly clear that 'the claim that the Congress represents India is less and less true since it cannot now claim to represent all the Hindus, apart altogether from its claim to represent the Moslems and other minorities'.[15] This had certainly projected Hindu Mahasabha as the sole representative and its leader, Shyama Prasad Mookherjee as the sole spokesman [*sic*] of Hindus.

B.R. Ambedkar, in his *Pakistan or the Partition of India* (1945), endorsed the claim for Pakistan as perhaps the most appropriate given the deep-rooted mistrust between Hindus and Muslims. It would not be irrelevant to refer to Iqbal's arguments defending the demand for Pakistan. Conceptualising Pakistan in a two nation theory format, Iqbal offered a map of the redistribution of territory forming a Muslim state comprising the north-west part of India and Bengal (Datta 2002: 5037). His blue print for Pakistan was based

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on language, race, history, religion and economic interests within the federal system with maximum autonomy for the provinces. In order to protect Muslim identity and form a strong political unit, he suggested the idea of bringing together the north-western states of Punjab, Frontier, Sind and Baluchistan under one state of which Bengal would invariably be a part given the Muslim preponderance in its demography. Such a state would cement the bond among the Muslims by creating 'a sense of responsibility and patriotism'. Unlike Ambedkar who had a realist aim of proper administration of the subcontinent in the aftermath of the British rule, Iqbal had a wider spiritual agenda of creating 'an Islam' capable of containing 'the influence of Arab imperialism [that] had shackled its civilisation, culture, *shariat* and education for centuries' (Puri 2003: 491).

BACKWARD CASTES MOVEMENTS

Caste, described as 'the steel frame of Hinduism' (Desai 1976: 243), has been one of the underlying features of the Indian society since ancient times. Having experienced a number of subversive alterations in the original *varna* system giving birth to numerous castes and sub-castes, in the modern times, the caste system in the country has come to revolve around three sociological constructs in order to discern the broad contours of the castes movements in India. First, the upper castes, holding the *dwija* status (the twice-born entitled to put on the sacred thread) consists of the Brahmans and *Kshatriya*s who traditionally used to hold sway over the society and have invariably been either in the seat of power or enjoyed the patronage and spoils bestowed by the rulers on them. Second, a vast majority of people belongs to intermediate castes, below the *dwija* and above the Dalits. Known as the 'backward castes,' this mammoth group of people comprises a socio-economically diversified set of people: on the one end of spectrum they stand very affluent, influential and touching the fence of the upper castes like the *Kayastha*s of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, *Jat*s of Rajasthan and Haryana, *Patidar*s of Gujarat, and so on, and on the other end stand, the majority ranks of tenant cultivators, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and other services castes belonging to almost all states of the country. Third, the lowest rung of caste

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hierarchy consists of untouchables or scheduled castes or Dalits who remain oppressed not only at the hands of upper castes but also some of the influential backward castes. In this section, the focus of study would be the movements championed by the second category of castes.

The genesis of backward caste movements in India may be traced to the sanskritising tendencies amongst the relatively influential sections of backward castes who sought a higher status for themselves through adopting the customs, manners and taboos from castes considered superior to them. While in the pre-British times, caste mobility was afforded by a non-interfering political system and availability of abundance of unclaimed land facilitating migration of people from one place to another, the establishment of the colonial rule in the country altered both the scenarios, leaving people with no other alternative than to seek an upward mobility in their social status through the movements for sanskritisation. Moreover, with the gradual introduction of electoral politics from the 1880s onwards, organising the members of their castes in their seemingly selfish and narrow-minded struggle for social recognition, jobs and political gains became the choicest strategy of the influential members of various castes.

In this regard, two distinct patterns of organising backward caste movements in various parts of the country were recognisable. One, in certain regions, mainly in southern and western India, movements were launched by the non-Brahman castes with the aim of seeking preferential treatment for their castes by the British government in matters of political and administrative favours which were supposedly cornered by the Brahmans in the main. Hence, movements pioneered by the castes like the *Vallala*, the *Reddi* and the *Kamma* in the old Madras Presidency, the *Vokkaliga* and *Lingayat* of Mysore, and the *Maratha* of Maharashtra were rooted in anti-Brahmanism with attacks being launched against caste as a tool of Brahmanic oppression on the one hand, and seeking favours from the British government to overcome such caste disabilities on the other. Two, in contrast to the anti-Brahman movements of southern and western India, the backward caste movements in north India did not appear to have the strong anti-Brahman tinge due to the fact that 'the Brahmins [in north] were generally backward with regard to modern education and government employment' (Rao 1979: 11). Hence, the backward caste movements in northern,

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eastern and the north-western regions appeared to be motivated by cleavages within the non-Brahman castes. Thus, under the leadership of intermediate castes like the *Ahir* and the *Kurmi* in Bihar, the *Teli* in Orissa, the *Noniya* in Punjab, the *Koli* in Gujarat, and so on, such backward caste movements apparently tried to secure a sanskritised position for themselves within the hierarchy of the Hindu society rather than shattering the traditional mould of the society as such.

The backward caste movements in India seemed to have been pioneered by social reformers of western and southern India, right from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Interestingly, 'the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu initially composed of various castes including the untouchables, but in course of time the untouchables were excluded from the movement' (Shah 1990: 125–26). In Maharashtra, the *Satyashodhak Samaj* was founded in 1873 by Jotiba Phule to work for the cause of social uplift of the lower castes. However, as Gail Omvedt pointed out, this movement, though started by the lowly *Mali* (gardener) caste, began to be dominated by the peasant *Maratha* caste, thereby introducing a peculiar dualism in the movement, as it now contained both an element of elite based conservative trend and a more genuine mass based radicalism. Faltering on its radical goals, the movement, nevertheless, attained its conservative goals as a result of which the Maharashtrian Brahman intelligentsia was 'swept from political power by a rich peasant non-Brahman elite with strong roots in the villages and with an institutional basis in rural cooperatives and educational societies' (Omvedt 1976: 2). Consisting also of the backward castes like *Sagar Dhangar*, in addition to the *Mali* and the *Maratha*, the sanskritising stream of the movement started getting the patronage of the Maharaja of Kolhapur from the 1890s onwards, with its stronghold remaining centred around the district of Satara. During the 1920s, under the leadership of nationalists like Keshavrao Jedhe and Dinkarrao Jawalkar, the movement would become closer to the Congress. Subsequently, in the 1930s, the proximity of the movement with the Congress would grow further, resulting in the eventual absorption of the movement into the nationalist movement being led by the Congress.

In Tamil Nadu, the backward caste movements followed the pattern set by Maharashtra, though with its own peculiar features.

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Trying to ameliorate their social conditions through the method of sanskritisation, by the beginning of twentieth century, in southern Tamil Nadu, the lower caste of toddy tappers and agricultural labourers known as *Shanan*s, experienced the emergence of a trading upper stratum within their fold that sought the *Kshatriya* status for itself in the 1901 census. Calling themselves *Nadar*, these people vehemently fought for temple-entry rights by the end of the nineteenth century. Similarly, in northern Tamil Nadu, the *Palli*s started claiming *Kshatriya* descent for them from 1871. Subsequently, they called themselves *Vanniya Kula Kshatriya* and started observing certain Brahmanical taboos in their social life. Later on, in the first quarter of twentieth century, the 'Justice' movement was started by leaders like C.N. Mudaliar, T.M. Nair and P. Tyagaraja Chetti on behalf of the intermediate backward castes such as *Vellala*s, *Mudaliar*s and *Chettiar*s, consisting also of several affluent landlords and merchants, in protest against the Brahman domination in education, services and politics, and demanded justice for the backward castes also. Soon, however, the anti-Brahman element in such movements started getting strengthened by the realisation of Brahman domination in education and services on the one hand, and the British encouragement to Dravidian separate identity as distinct from the Brahmanical identity fostering Tamil separatism, on the other. Yet, the sub-elite character of backward caste movements in Tamil Nadu remained critical till the arrival of the Self-Respect movement on the scene by the end of the 1920s, which not only radicalised caste movements in Tamil Nadu but also hardened the anti-Brahmanical and anti-nationalist attitude of such movements.

Significant backward caste movements were also evident in other regions of south India such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore. In Kerala, though the seeds of caste movements were sown by the untouchable *Ezhava*s under the inspiration of Sri Narayan Guru from the early twentieth century, the leadership of backward caste movements in the state eventually came into the hands of the *Nair*s. Protesting against the domination of non-Malayali Brahmans as well as the *Nambudiri* Brahmans in state spoils, C.V. Raman Pillai organised the Malayali Memorial in 1891 which was later absorbed within the reigning elites by the end of the 1890s. Subsequently, K. Ramakrishna Pillai and Mannath Padmanabha Pillai tried to organise the *Nair*s in a more radical manner under the banner of

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Nair Service Society in 1914. In Andhra Pradesh, the backward caste movements were championed by castes like *Reddi*s and *Kamma*s who sought better representation for themselves in education, state services and politics as compared to the representation of Brahmans in these spheres of public life. Backward caste movements were also waged in the princely state of Mysore by dominant castes like *Vokkaliga*s and *Lingayat*s. Though bereft of extreme anti-Brahmanism as witnessed in the caste movements of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the Kannada caste movements seemed to be mainly confined to the setting up of caste bodies like the Vokkaliga Sangha and the Lingayat Education Fund Association to serve the cause of the particular castes.

Apart from Maharashtra and south India, backward caste movements also gained prominence in the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bengal in varying degrees. Prominent castes spearheading the backward caste movements in Bihar included the *Goala*s or *Ahir*s or *Yadav*s, and the *Kurmi*s. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they started opposing the system of forced labour for the *zamindars* and also resisted the imposition of taxes on them by the landlords. *Goala*s not only refused to sell their produces like cow-dung cake and other milk products to upper caste *zamindar*s at concessional rates, they also refused to follow customary laws which led to occasional skirmishes between the upper castes and the *Goala*s. Gradually, they started taking recourse to agitational methods to demand an improvement in their social status and facilitation of other sanskritising means for their caste. They also began to demand reservations for themselves in the army and other government services. A remarkable feature of the backward caste movements launched by the *Goala*s in Bihar was that these were pioneered by the well-off stratum of the caste of *Goala*s. Moreover, their movements also gained the support of businessmen and large farmers as they also seemed to be jealous of the domination of upper castes in fields like education, government services and politics.

Though not very formidable, backward caste movements were not altogether uncommon in states like Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, where the teasing Brahman domination did not appear to be as apparent as it used to be in the western and the southern parts of the country. In Bengal, for instance, backward caste movements started gaining significance by the dawn of the twentieth century. Under the leadership of local landlords and Calcutta based intelligentsia,

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the *Kaibartta* of Midnapur began to call themselves as *Mahishya*s and set up certain caste associations like Jati Nirdharani Sabha in 1897 and Central Mahishya Samiti during the census of 1901. However, despite waging a struggle for their social betterment, the *Mahishya*s remained critical in success of the national movement in Midnapur and surrounding areas. Like Bengal, backward caste movements failed to make much headway in Uttar Pradesh also, ostensibly due to the fact that Brahman domination was not predominant in the fields of education, government jobs and politics in such a way as to attract the jealousy of the backward castes on the one hand, and a number of relatively better off caste groups like *Rajput*s and *Vaishaya*s acting as the buffer between Brahmans and the backward castes, on the other. Yet, certain castes like the *Kayastha*s despite being fairly represented in education and state jobs, manifested their caste consciousness by setting up an all-India association and starting a caste oriented newspaper called *Kayastha Samachar* from Allahabad. Otherwise, backward caste movements remained, by and large, insignificant in Uttar Pradesh.

An analysis of the broad contours of backward caste movements in India would reveal a number of remarkable features regarding the nature and consequences of such movements. First, there appears a sharp qualitative difference between backward caste movements in northern and southern India. While such movements in the north remained somewhat subdued and limited within the confines of caste framework vying for sanskritisation at the most, in the south, such movements became quite formidable seeking a complete break from caste system if their demands in relegating the dominance of the Brahmans were not accepted in totality.

Second, the prolonged agitations of backward caste movements ordinarily desisted from taking recourse to massive direct action in pressing for their demands. Consequently, backward caste movements rarely came into direct confrontation either with the upper castes or with state authorities. In north India, such movements usually aimed at ameliorating the social status of the backward castes in a peaceful and gradual manner. Though in south India, these movements took radical stand and their strategy involved some elements of confrontation, barring few exceptions, such movements did not result in violent activities on a large scale.

Third, the net result of most of these movements appeared to be only in partial success, at the most, in the attainment of their

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declared objectives. The caste configuration in north India has remained by and large same despite the best efforts of certain affluent castes to sanskritise their social status. In southern and western India, the vehemence of the anti-Brahmanism of backward caste movements started fizzling out in post-independence times. Instead of seeking a break from the Brahman dominated Hindu caste system, such movements turned out to be a tool in the hands of politicians seeking votes of these groups and many of them were converted as pressure groups to demand wider reservations in governmental jobs and educational institutions. Thus, most of these movements seemed to have fallen prey to the tricks of the self-serving members of their castes in the post-independence times.

Finally, the caste movement seems to have some sort of cause–effect relationship with the general march of the nationalist movement in the country. Given the progressive value system of the national movement right from its inception, the participants in the movement, apart from fighting against British colonialism, also waged a sustained battle against the inequitable social order rooted in the system of caste. In effect, an increasing number of hitherto marginalised groups of people began to come forward to take part in the national movement, thereby turning an elitist movement into a mass movement in the course of time. As R.P. Dutt (1940: 500) argues,

> ...the advancing forces of the Indian people are leading the fight against caste, against illiteracy, against the degradation of the untouchables, against all that holds the people backward. While learned lectures are being delivered on the antique Hindu civilisation and its unchanging characteristics, the Indian national movement, enjoying the unquestioned support of the overwhelming majority of the people, has inscribed on its banner a complete democratic programme of universal equal citizenship, without distinction of caste, creed or sex….

A.R. Desai has pointed out dual aspects of the lower caste movements in the country: one progressive, and the other reactionary and anti-national. As he argues,

> ...when a lower caste organised even on a caste basis and fought for democratic freedoms, its struggle helped the general struggle for the unity of the Indian people on a democratic basis.… But when a lower

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> caste organised itself for securing a specific weight in the constitution of the country, when it demanded separate electorates, it acted in a reactionary and anti-national manner. (Desai 1976: 258)

In the final analysis, therefore, the backward castes movement reflected the changing paradigms of the social texture in India. Though the urge amongst the backward castes for some sort of upward mobilisation in the social structure of the country through the means of sanskritisation was prevalent for quite a long period of time, it attained a new dimension in the wake of the national movement. With the call of national leaders for mass participation of the people in the national movement, the leaders of backward castes, like other castes, got an unique opportunity to not only bring about socio-economic and political awakening amongst the people of their castes but also to strike a hard bargain with the national leadership in order to secure for them a greater degree of share in positions of the Congress party and the government. Thus, the backward castes movement was successful to a large extent in not only creating a massive awakening amongst the people of these castes so that they might turn out to be a formidable pressure group but also extracting a fair degree of preferential treatment both in the constitutional provisions as well as the positions of power in the government.

DALIT MOVEMENTS

Dalits or the so-called 'untouchables' constituted the lowest section of the traditional Hindu society based on the fourfold *varna* system, whose distortions gave birth to the cruel institution of caste. However, in the course of time, the social status of Dalits has gone down further to such an extent that they found themselves driven out even from within the rubric of the *varna* system. Consequently, they were called *avarna*s, meaning the ones whose social reckoning lied outside the *varna* system. Such branding of these people eventually led to a sinister belief amongst the so-called upper castes people that any kind of interaction with Dalits would entail impurity for them. Hence, gradually, the touch, sometimes the shadow and even hearing the voices of Dalits came to be regarded as polluting the personality of caste Hindus. In other words,

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despite constituting a substantive section of the society, Dalits were subjected to such inhuman treatment by other sections of the society that they had no other means than to start some sort of social movement to ameliorate their conditions in the Indian society.

From the very beginning, Dalit movements in the country appeared to be characterised by certain significant features. The most profound issue which acted as the nucleus of most of the Dalit movements seemed to be the issue of untouchability. In other words, the stigma of being untouchable was so unbearable for the people that their initial struggle hovered around the issue of abolition of untouchability and the provision of full-fledged participation of these people in all social and religious institutions and processions of the country. Thus, the real test of social emancipation of Dalits came to be reflected in the form of temple entry movements launched in various parts of the country. Later, with the divide and rule policy of the colonial rulers, set on to offering certain privileges to one section of society to the exclusion of others, the focus of Dalit movements shifted to gaining, maintaining and sometimes enhancing their share of reservation in government services and political offices. Hence, it appears that Dalit movements in the country have failed to secure an absolute social uplift of these people, presumably due, in part, to the shift in the focus of these movements from securing social equality to gaining just few positions in government jobs and political offices, both in the pre- and post-independence times.

Even before the emergence of certain recognisable and formidable movements seeking to bring about a turnaround in the social status of Dalits, the untenability of the social oppression of these people had already been articulated by several social reformers and saints in the country. For instance, the galaxy of illustrious and secular saints like Ramanand, Chaitanya, Kabir, Tukaram and other coming in the wake of the *Bhakti* movement, provided a well-reasoned critique of the existing inhuman practices being followed under the garb of caste system. Expressing their faith in the innate equality of all human beings in both worldly as well godly spheres of life, they argued against the existing evil social practices and called for the creation of a social order in which each and every individual feels to be equal and honourable.

In modern times, the genesis of Dalit movements may be argued to have taken place with the initiation of various socio-religious

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movements in various parts of the country. For instance, the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, argued against the prevailing caste based inequalities in the society and attacked the feeling of casteism and untouchability amongst certain sections of the society. However, remarkable efforts in this regard began to be made with the founding of Arya Samaj by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875. Emphasising that untouchability did not constitute an essential part of the *varna* system, he argued for work-based allocation of social status to each individual in society, as a result of which a Brahman could degrade to be *Shudra* and a *Shudra* could upgrade to be a Brahman, provided the state permits them to be so (for details, see Jordens 1978). Thus, as Shah (1990: 109) argues, '[T]he neo-Vedantic movements and non-Brahmin movements played an important catalystic role in developing anti-caste or anti-Hinduism Dalit movements in some parts of the country.'

The pioneering anti-Brahman and anti-untouchability movement during the 1870s happens to begin in the form of the *Satyashodhak Samaj* under the leadership of Jotiba Phule. Hailing from the *Mali* caste himself, Jotiba, in his early life, was subjected to various types of humiliations born out of Brahmanical arrogance which infused a sense of revolt and reform within him. Consequently, he found no other method of securing a dignified and respectful place for the members of lower castes and untouchables within the rubric of the Hindu social order than to begin a social reform movement for the same. Jotiba was very critical of the leaders of the Congress for their neglect of the cause of securing an honourable social status for the lower castes and untouchables in the Indian society. He, therefore, planned to start various measures aimed at ameliorating the social status of the lower caste people in Maharashtra, the foremost of which included the opening up of schools and orphanages for the women and children belonging to all castes. Gradually, however, the vigour of the *Satyashodhak Samaj* to act as the catalyst of anti-untouchability movement in Maharashtra appeared to be waning, with the dominant sections of other backward castes coming to dominate the organisation and activities of the *Satyashodhak Samaj*.

Another significant anti-untouchability movement was launched by the untouchable caste of *Ezhava* in 1903 under the leadership of Sri Narayan Guru with the setting up of Sree Narayan Dharama Paripalana Yogam (SNDP). Aimed at sanskritising the customs

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and norms of the *Ezhava* community, the SNDP formulated a two-pronged strategy to achieve social emancipation of the untouchables. One, while sanskritising the social rituals and traditions of the community, it decided to abandon the practice of untouchability with respect to castes below the *Ezhava*s. Two, in order to provide for a feeling of apparent equality with caste Hindus, it built a number of temples in Kerala and declared them open to people of all castes. However, these efforts of Narayan Guru could not achieve the desired level of social acceptability of the *Ezhavas* by sections of caste Hindus. He, therefore, organised *satyagraha* for temple entry in the 1920s and also sought economic and political favours for his community from the colonial government.

The decade of the 1920s happened to be time of comprehensive and intense anti-untouchability movements started by Dalits in various parts of the country. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, a flurry of activities was either initiated or strengthened by various groups of untouchables. A prominent movement in this context happens to be the Nadar Mahajan Sangam. The members of the *Shanar* or *Nadar* community, over the years, had been able to ameliorate their economic conditions by abandoning their traditional occupations in some cases and by continuing with the same in others. Having attained a sort of economic affluence, this community embarked on the path of social alleviation of its status by way of sanskritising its norms and rituals. Eventually, the Nadar Mahajan Sangam began a concerted effort to gain political prominence in the country. As Hardgrave (1969: 201) pointed out, '[T]he caste association has played a vital role, nevertheless, in the political mobilisation of the Nadar community, serving as the agent of community integration and as the vehicle for its entrance into the political system of modern India.'

The other remarkable Dalit movement in Tamil Nadu during the 1920s was led by Ramaswamy Naikar or Periyar. Branding it as 'Self-Respect Movement,' Periyar's major concern did not remain confined only to sankritising the rituals and norms of the untouchables. Rather, he was of the firm opinion that the plight of the untouchables could not be ameliorated within the framework of what he called as 'Brahmanical Hinduism'. He once famously remarked that there are certain things which cannot be mended but only ended. In the later years, Periyar's critique of the Hindu

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religion and Hindu way of life became very shrill. Under the banner of the Justice Party, he launched a number of vigorous anti-untouchability movements that not only claimed a higher social, economic and political recognition to the untouchables, but also some sort of reverse adverse treatment to the hitherto dominant upper caste communities. His denouncement of the Hindu religion went as far as cutting off the holy thread of the Brahmans, hitting at the deities with slippers and dismantling the idols of Hindu gods and goddesses. Thus, the anti-untouchability movement of Periyar turned somewhat sadist and revengeful when he was not able to secure the position he was seeking for the members of the untouchable communities.

Away from the southern states, a significant anti-untouchability movement appeared in Punjab during this time. Known as the Adi-Dharma movement, it was led by a prominent untouchable of the state, Mangoo Ram, with the aim of sanskritising the customs and rituals of the untouchables in his state. The Adi-Dharma movement began with the conviction that the untouchables in Punjab existed as a distinct socio-religious entity or *quam* like those of Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, since ages. They should, therefore, vie for a distinct set of patterns of treatment which may lead to the amelioration of their socio-religious and political conditions in the society. As Mark Juergensmeyer (1982: 80) succinctly illustrates, '[I]t had established a fact which previously had been unproved: that the untouchable castes were capable of mobilising for their own benefits, and of organising in ways that permitted them to compete under the conditions that governed the socio-political area at large.' However, in subsequent years, the internal dissentions within the movement became apparent, and educated progressive leadership came in sharp opposition to the traditional illiterate followers of the movement. Over the years, the movement lost its momentum and the residue of it became part of the Scheduled Castes Federation of Ambedkar.

Gradually, during this time, Maharashtra started becoming the hub of anti-untouchability movements under the leadership of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, who in the later years was, by and large, accepted as the all-India leader of untouchables. Drawing his descent from the untouchable caste of Mahar, he began the Mahar movement with the aim of eradicating untouchability from Maharashtra. Though the Mahar movement attained fair

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degree of success, its experiences convinced Ambedkar that for the holistic advancement of the plight of his fellow brethren, the movement must be rooted in the political mould. Hence, Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party to fight for the interests of untouchables. However, the party could not make much impact on the overall plight of the people and, in ultimate analysis, it remained what Eleanor Zelliot (1970: 52) calls 'much of the nature of a caste association functioning in the political arena', thereby prompting Ambedkar to look for other methodology of furthering his cause.

The decade of the 1930s saw the Dalit movements' growing acceptance of Ambedkar as their leader. In turn, Ambedkar started taking more formidable positions with declarations such as exhorting the Dalits that 'you have nothing to lose, except your religion' (Keer 1954: 273) on the one hand, and asking for separate electorate for Dalits, on the other. Such opinions of Ambedkar brought him in direct conflict with the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi who neither subscribed to the view of conversion of Dalits to any other religion nor agreed with the demand that Dalits be given separate electorate in the country. Hence, when the Communal Award was announced in 1932, envisaging separate electorate for Dalits, as demanded by Ambedkar, Gandhi went on a fast unto death to oppose such divisive decision of the colonial government purportedly on the asking of Dalits themselves. Eventually, a sort of compromise was arrived at between Gandhi and Ambedkar whereby it was decided to have reservation of seats for Dalits within the fold of general constituencies.

Despite signing the Poona Pact, Ambedkar seemed to be quite frustrated for not being able to secure a distinct identity for Dalits in the Indian society. He, therefore, for some time, opposed the demand for independence of the country and argued for the continuation of colonial rule, purportedly for safeguarding the interests of Dalits. Later on, he set up the Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942 as a pan-Indian party to fight for the cause of Dalit emancipation through the means of agitational and electoral politics. The concrete demands of the Federation in the later years ordinarily boiled down to the issues of securing reservations in governmental jobs and political positions. Thus, on the eve of independence, the broad contours of Dalit movements mainly, if not totally, remained what was decided by Ambedkar, though in Tamil Nadu, the Dalit movement was quite distinct and more demanding in comparison to the movement led by Ambedkar.

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Apart from the mainstream Dalit movements initiated and championed by the members of Dalit communities, other individuals and sections of people also made concerted efforts to ameliorate the socio-economic and political conditions of Dalits. In this regard, the contribution of Gandhi stands out prominently. At a time when nefarious efforts were being made both by the colonial rulers as well as a section of the native people to present Dalits as distinct sections in society and such distinctness was being sought to be institutionalised through the instrumentality of separate electorate, Gandhi's intervention appeared very timely and effective. Calling Dalits as *Harijan* or 'the children of God', he set up the All India Harijan Sevak Sangh in 1932 to work for the social and educational uplift of Dalits all over the country. He also started the publication of a journal called *Harijan* to put forth his opinion on the issues of Dalit emancipation on the one hand, and call upon the people to go for constructive programmes designed to bring about socio economic turnaround in the conditions of Dalits, on the other hand. The 1932 Poona Pact with Ambedkar appeared to be an acceptance of the Gandhian view on the issue of the place of the Dalit community in the Indian society.

In the end, it may be argued that the rise of Dalit movements in the country was symptomatic of the growing urge for social emancipation amongst the sections of people who remained oppressed for centuries. Evolving initially as some sort of sanskritising movement, mainly in southern and western parts of the country, the Dalit movements soon gained the shape of self-respect movements whereby they started demanding equal access to public religious and livelihood places and sources, in addition to economic and political rights for themselves. In the twentieth century, with the arrival of the British policy of divide and rule, the main demands of Dalit movements started hovering around the issues of reservation in the government jobs and political positions under the leadership of Ambedkar. Though such divisive tendency was stemmed to a large extent by the intervention of nationalist leaders, most prominently Mahatma Gandhi, Dalits were provided with reservation in the government jobs and political positions within the fold of general constituencies. Thus, on the eve of independence, Dalit movements in the country were, by and large, accommodated within the broad spectrum of the national movement, with Ambedkar emerging

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as the major participant in the constitution making process and drafting a constitution which would be equally acceptable to all sections of the Indian society including the Dalits.

TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Being a vastly diverse country with all sorts of geographical formations like hilly and mountainous regions on the one hand, and dense forests on the other, it is but natural for India to be home to a substantive majority of people known as tribals. As essentially ethnic groups, each tribal formation has its own distinct culture and identity in terms of rituals, values, social structure, dialects, lifestyles, festivals and celebrations, and so on. However, despite being culturally different from the dominant non-tribal population of the country, the tribals share at least one common trait with the non-tribals in the form of various movements which came as some sort of protest or struggle against what was perceived to be unjust or exploitative interference in the traditionally settled life of these people. Yet, the broad contours of tribal movements in India carry marked distinctions, both in terms of form and content, in comparison to other socio-economic movements, say peasant, launched by the non-tribal population of the country. As an analyst points out,

> ...while the peasant movements tend to remain purely agrarian as peasants lived off land, the tribal movements were both agrarian and forest based, because the tribals' dependence on forests was as crucial as their dependence on land. There was also the ethnic factor. The tribal revolts were directed against zamindars, moneylenders and petty government officials not because they exploited them but also because they were aliens. (Singh 1986: 166)

Nature of Tribal Movements

The long history of tribal movements in India has also been marked by the existence of a vast diversity and variation in the nature and context of these movements. Beginning from the late eighteenth

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century till the attainment of independence in 1947 and even after that, tribal movements remained a critical element in the proper understanding of resistance movements launched by the people to protest against undue interference in or infringement of their basic rights by both official and non-official agents. However, in order to facilitate a systematic study of these movements despite having the vast diversity and scope, scholars have tried to classify these movements on the basis of the basic issues for which such movements have been launched. For instance, taking note of the classifications offered by various experts to delineate the nature of the tribal movements, Shah (1990: 88–89) suggests a threefold typology of such movements as ethnic movements, agrarian movements and political movements. The tribal movements in the nature of ethnic movements usually tended to be resistance movements aimed at opposing the subtle and, at times, secretive efforts on the part of the non-tribals, both British as well as the native people to penetrate in the preserved ethnic domains of the life of the tribals. For instance, when the tribal people felt certain perceptible threat to the basic components of their ethnic identity such as rituals, values, social structures, life styles, dialects, and so on, they put up stiff resistance. Such type of tribal movements was dominant in the early phase of the establishment of British rule in India.

A number of tribal movements also came up in the nature of agrarian movements to oppose their exploitation at the hands of both colonial and native exploiters. However, there existed a great deal of variation on the peasantry nature of such movements owing to the variations in the extent of peasantisation of various tribal societies. Yet, the common point of all the tribal movements launched on agrarian issues remained the strong sentiments of the people against exploitative policies of the colonial rulers and strong arm tactics of the unscrupulous elements like *zamindar*s, moneylenders, and so on, which not only tended to destroy their means of livelihood but also put unbearable financial burden on them. The movements launched by Birsa Munda, Tana Bhagat, and so on, were in the nature of such movements.

Finally, the score of tribal movements arising in the nature of political movements apparently drew their inspiration from the ethos of the broad anti-colonial struggle being launched in the country. Despite having their own share of ethnic as well as agrarian

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problems, these movements took the predominantly political form, presumably due to the nationalist perspectives of their leaders who thought of getting their problems redressed through the mechanism of national movement. However, in post-independence times, tribal movements in the political mould vied for political autonomy for their people and in some cases sought separate political identity for themselves. Yet, in pre-independence times, the basic operational domain of such movements remained confined within the framework laid down by the broad contours of the national movement. Such sort of movements became dominant during the times of mainstream national movement in the country.

In analysing the nature of tribal movements in the country, it needs to be pointed out that most of such movements were product of multiple factors and complex processes which were weighing heavily on the life of the tribal peoples. Hence, tribal movements were seemingly desperate attempts of the people in the face of their failure to get their grievances redressed through peaceful and legitimate means. Explaining the dynamics of the rise of Santhal rebellion, an expert eloquently points out,

> ...the rebellion was not begun on the spur of the moment as a result of sudden passion. The Santhal had made many attempts to present their grievances to the government but were rebuffed for various reasons and by various means. Numerous meetings and communications between Santhal villages preceded armed revolt. (Orans 1965: 32)

However, it appears, from looking at the participants, issues, organisation and leadership of various movements, that these movements did not clearly visualise the basic character of their struggle and became a kind of comprehensive movement seeking to find solution to most, if not all, of the problems of the people. Thus, being quite complex, tribal movements were branded as ethnic, agrarian and political in nature keeping in view the fundamental characteristic of a movement which became the identifiable mark of it. Yet, most of the tribal movements carried within themselves the elements of all the other typologies, given some degree of commonality in the socio-cultural and politico-economic life of these people.

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Phases of Tribal Movements

Tribal movements have had a chequered history of more than two centuries in India. Such a long span of tribal movements has been divided into various phases by scholars, of which the formulations of Suresh Kumar Singh (1985: 101–22) seem more plausible as he offers an analytical framework of studying these movements in three distinct phases in pre-independence times.

Corresponding with the expansion and consolidation of British rule in India, the first phase of tribal movements covers the period of 1795–1860. This was the time when British penetration was making rapid strides in reaching to hitherto untouched territories within the country. The British not only tried to annex a number of Indian states from the princely rulers but also extended the unwelcome reach of their administrative structure to areas and people which till now enjoyed full autonomy and unfettered lifestyle of their own. For example, '[T]he Kol insurrection of 1831–1832 was born out of frustration and anger-frustration with the new system of Government and laws, and anger at the people who either enforced them or took undue advantage of them' (Jha 1962: 240). Hence, most of the tribal movements of this time came in conjunction with the non-tribal peoples also, given the common enmity of the two against British colonialism. These appeared as primary resistance movements as there was no precedence of the tribal people rising against colonial rulers to protest the occupation of their autonomous functional domain. Moreover, the movements of this phase were more in the nature of reflecting the anger of a whole region rather than just a group of people. For instance, the Chhotanagpur plateau became the hub of such movements during the 1820s, owing to the common grudge of all the people against the sinister designs of British rulers.

During the second phase (1860–1920), tribal movements underwent subtle transformations in their nature, context and intensity. With the penetration of British rule in India almost complete, it was the turn of economic exploitation of the people which became the main issue of resistance by the people. Unsurprisingly, the destruction of economic structure of tribal communities by colonial exploiters and its replacement by rent-maximising structures was

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construed by the people as secret designs of the British to ruin their unique culture and ethnic identity. Hence, tribal movements of these times developed an unconventional blend of socio-religious reform on the one hand, and the political resistance, on the other. This was also the time when tribal movements started taking messianic overtones with the emergence of a number of pioneers who were regarded as Gods out to save them from the brutalities of the aliens.[16] The insurrections in the form of Munda–Oraon Sardar movement and the ones led by Birsa Munda, Tana Bhagat, and so on, are reflective of the major trends in the tribal movements of this period of time.

The final phase of pre-independence tribal movements (1921–47) appeared to be imbued by the basic ideas and ethos of the national movement in India. Most of these movements were political in nature and reflected the vision of their leaders on fundamental issues affecting the people. Hence, while most of the tribal movements became valuable associates of the national movement, few of them also tended to take separatist overtones in the course of time. For instance, while in Central Provinces, tribal leaders—like Ganjan Korku—became a formidable force during the Civil Disobedience Movement (Sarkar 1989: 298), certain parts of the Chhotanagpur plateau became a theatre for separatist movement amongst the tribals.

In conclusion, it may be said that the trajectory of various tribal movements in India had been varying owing to the distinctness of the basic issues involved in each movement. As explained earlier, despite the presence of a number of complex issues in the rise and run of the numerous tribal movements, they got distinct categorisation precisely due to the predominance of a particular issue or element in a particular movement. Interestingly, such issues ranged from the actual erosion of ethnic identities and socio-cultural distinctness of the tribals to those of economic exploitation and disappearance of traditional economic rights of the people on forests and lands. Occasionally, the sense of loss of power and resources within the framework of the newly introduced system of administration by the British also induced certain tribal movements (see Mathur 1988). Yet, the final product of all such motivations came in the form of formidable tribal resurrections against the colonial and native exploiters of the people.

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WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

Traditionally, the notion of women's movement in India does not appear to be a straightforward move towards securing gender justice and women's empowerment, as has been the case in the West. Rather, in India, the autonomous position of women in the Indian society ensured some sort of equality for both men and women in the various walks of life in such a way that both became supplementary to each other. The prevalence of numerous social evils having adverse impact on the position of women was not a product of male domination over females. They were either part of certain religious traditions or sneaked into the social customs of the people at some point of time in history (see Roy 2002: 13–23). Hence, social reform movements in the country never construed women's issues in the framework of liberation of women from male domination. The subtle perversions in the outlook of people towards women crept-in in the course of time with the deepening of colonial cultural values and perspectives of looking at things in Indian society. Exposing such nefarious designs of colonial penetration in lives of the women, it has been argued,

> ...ideologically, cultural imperialism has introduced the notion of female inferiority which had no part in Indian culture, where female power and its containment was stressed. Although, females were segregated in the upper castes into the domestic sphere, this separation did not imply an inferior evaluation of the domestic, since that arena was crucial to the maintenance of caste purity. The inferiority notion adds a derogatory component to the gender ideology, serving to worsen women's position. It also makes for a degraded position for women abroad when added to the imperialist ideology of western racial superiority; for, the context of imperialism creates a notion of not only women's inferiority to men, but also of Indian women's inferiority to Western women. (Liddle and Joshi 1986: 240)

Therefore, the study of women's movement during pre-independence times in India percolates down to an analysis of the role of women in various spheres of life, on the one hand, and the efforts at creating an autonomous movement to address the various issues of women's empowerment, on the other.

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Genesis of Women's Movement

Given the uniqueness of issues pervading the women's movement in India, it was obvious that early efforts at addressing the issues of women's conditions came as a part of the vision of social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and so on, during the nineteenth century. Naturally, in such reform movements, the issues of women's movement were conceptualised within the framework of reforming the Hindu society in order to liberate women from the cruel and inhuman social customs and traditions.[17] Initially, the Mahila Mandals organised by the social reform organisations such as Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj served the useful purpose of infusing the sense of organising and venturing out of their houses to seek a more active role in the activities of society. Later on, the prominent leaders of the nationalist movement like Ranade also took upon themselves the responsibility of reforming the socio-religious customs of the Hindu society which had been found to be prejudicial to the dignity and status of women in society.[18]

Interestingly, the early pursuits in women's movement in India came from males leading various socio-religious reform movements. However, the growing clamour for the emancipation of women from household engagements led to the arrival of a number of women, mainly from higher echelons of the social hierarchy to lead the women's movement in the country. The critical aspect of the leadership of such women was their relative independence from the engagements of either household activities or bonds of family life (Savara and Gothoskar 1984: 147). This appears to be a significant revelation keeping in mind the fact that in Indian society, much of the loss of independence of women emanates from their excessive engagements with the familial and household activities. Thus, in the initial phase of its inception, the women's movement in the country remained confined to the efforts of certain particular individuals only which, nevertheless, consisted of both males as well as females.

Growth and Development of Women's Movement

With the growing awakening amongst women in the wake of the mass orientation of the national movement in India, the

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women's movement also started taking diverse strands and gaining prominence in various activities of the time. Overall, the participation of women became formidable in the main body of national movement. It has been argued that women's active participation in the national movement not only provided a new found vigour and strength to the national movement but also benefited the cause of women's liberation in the country. In fact, women's participation in the national movement was a sort of symbolic invitation to all the women folks of the country that the extra-household activities were no more the bastion of males. Women could be equal partner of males in all the activities of life including waging a concerted struggle against the mighty British Empire. Amazingly, the massive participation of women in the national movement was found more conducive to the Gandhian strategy of non-violence and *satyagraha* on the ground that the women would be less aggressive and more forebearing. Even the male national leaders found women's active participation quite amazing and welcomed them by offering equal and sometimes more opportunities to lead the movement. For instance, during the Quit India Movement of 1942, with the arrest of the prominent leaders, the leading role in the movement was played by women like Aruna Asaf Ali who continued the struggle against the British rule.[19] At the same time, women also provided the much needed backup to the male national leadership by ensuring moral and material support to the imprisoned leaders.

During the national movement, a number of leaders made direct and concerted efforts at ensuring that women join the national movement in good numbers. To them, massive participation of women in the national movement would not only alter the texture of the hitherto male-dominated freedom struggle but would also ensure that women come out of their homes to seek and find an equal opportunity in the affairs of the national movement. Hence, Gandhi evolved the strategy of encouraging the participation of women in the national movement without rupturing their social responsibilities; it proved a turning point in the women's movement, as till now, many women were not able to find a way of adjusting their social and political responsibilities. Similarly, Gandhi argued for women breaking free of their kitchen and becoming active participants in the liberation movement of the country.[20] The contribution of Subhas Chandra Bose in according a

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place of prominence to women in the national movement was also commendable. While in India, he set up an organisation known as Mahila Rashtriya Sangh to promote the cause of greater participation of women in the national movement. Later on, when he commanded the Indian National Army (INA), amongst his trusted lieutenants, women like Captain Lakshmi Sehgal shouldered prime responsibilities in trying to drive the British out of the country.

In addition to playing commendable role in the mainstream national movement of the country, women also joined hands with males to enhance the formidability of a number of tribal, peasant and trade union movements. The unique contribution of women, for instance, in the tribal movements in Bihar, came in the form of not only supplying essential items to the rebels to their hideouts and keeping up their morale at times but also in taking up arms and putting up a brave and inscrutable resistance to the mighty exploitative forces (Mitra 1984: 89). Women's participation was also sought and utilised by the various peasant organisations and movements, though not to the extent as had been the case in tribal and trade union movements. As a researcher noted in the context of a particular movement,

> ...the [*sic*] women were not involved by the Kisan Sabha in the struggle in the same way or to the same extent as their male counterparts even in the most intensive phase of the struggle. The militancy, commitment and ingenuity of women, of which there was ample proof, were neither fully absorbed nor developed, and women were, by and large, assigned a mere 'supportive' role. (Saldanha 1986: 51)

However, such a passive approach of the Kisan Sabha towards women's participation in the movement might be attributed to the lack of radicalism in their perspective on women's participation in the peasant struggles. Almost similar pattern had also been followed by the leaders of trade union movements in giving only a secondary role to the women in their movements, many of which were pioneered by the communist party and leaders.

The valuable role of women in the aforesaid movements, however, has not been construed by certain scholars as forming part of the core women's movement in the country. For instance, Gail Omvedt calls them 'pre-movements' in the context of the rise of women's movement, though she acknowledges the contribution of such pre-movements. As she writes, 'They reveal the power of

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women as a force in society, they allow women opportunity to begin to bring forward their own needs, and they are often part of a process leading to the development of women's movements as such' (Omvedt 1978: 373). Therefore, a new impetus was given to women's movement in India with the emergence of certain autonomous women's groups during the 1920s. Pioneering such organisations appeared to be the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) which was set up in 1924 to articulate informed and concerted opinion of women on issues concerning the emancipation of women in the country (Basu and Ray 1990: 37). The activities of the organisation during the later years expanded to cover the whole spectrum of women's liberation in India, and called for equal rights and opportunities for women in the Indian society. For instance, at a time when a constitutional package was being envisioned by the colonial rulers during the late 1920s, the AIWC reiterated the demand for right to vote to women in case adult franchise was introduced in the country. Similarly, during the 1930s, it raised the issue of miseries being faced by women workers in mines and factories, and demanded a comprehensive package of welfare measures for them. What, however, was lacking in AIWC was the distinct element of radicalism which could have altered the framework of women's movement in the country. Gradually, even progressive elements within the AIWC got sidelined and it came to be dominated by middle class women keen to maintain the status quo in place of asking for radical reform measures in order to gain substantive degree of comprehensive empowerment for women. Thus, the AIWC lost much of its critical position in being a milestone in the growth of women's movement in the country in the pre-independent times.[21]

Issues in Women's Movement

The issues which remained crucial in the rise and growth of women's movement in India usually hovered around the moderate demands of women for a respectful place for them in society on the one hand, and a greater degree of political and economic powers in the decision-making process of the country on the other. Thus, in the domain of social issues confronting the women's movements, the *purdah* (veil) system turned out to be a critical point, as it was found

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to be secluding women from shouldering various responsibilities on an equal footing. It was reflective of the permanent subordination of women to men in the Indian society (see Engels 1996). Similarly, other issues typical to the personality of women such as rape, dowry harassment, trafficking of women, violence in the family, and so on, also came up prominently in the proceedings of the women's movements. What was, however, revealing was that the social uplift of women in India during those times was conceptualised within the accepted socio-cultural norms of the society and, barring the cruel and inhuman practices, no other radical solutions were sought to bring about a revolutionary transformation in the social standing of women in the country. The social condition of women was sought to be ameliorated within the confines of the Hindu *shastra*s (religious scriptures) and morality.

Amongst the political issues highlighted by the women's movement during the colonial period, the demand for right to vote remained central throughout. Raised first of all by leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and so on, in 1917, the issue became the rallying point for various women activists, organisations and movements in the course of time to present it as a symbol of political emancipation of women in the country. Later on, the issue was also raised by male leaders of the national movement before the statutory reforms commissions set up by the colonial government. However, the perspective of the British government on the issue, including its legal system, did not allow for the bestowing of this right on women and the issue remained central to the women's movements. On the nationalist side, the political position of women appeared quite strong, as the increasing participation of women in the national movement ensured that they were also given adequate representation in the organisation and decision-making process of the political parties.

Finally, it may be argued that the broad contours of women's movement in colonial India was reflected more in the form of various resistance movements having their roots in the non-gendered aspects of life. Moreover, these movements arose more as some sort of protest movement against the exploitative policies and activities of the British government than the rights movement seeking to attain certain specified rights and opportunities for its members. Of these, the mainstream national movement happened

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to be the comprehensive arena where the issues of women's liberation were also deliberated and acted upon. Hence, instead of producing a well-organised and radical women's movement, the national movement prepared the ground for the development of a concerted and formidable women's movement in the post-independence times.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

In modern times, the genesis of the civil rights movement in India may be traced to the colonial period. The long years of throttling and dehumanising colonial rule has ensured that the majority of Indians remain oblivious to the ideas of civil rights, respect for common people and enjoyment of a dignified life by all even as late as the 1820s. However, for obvious reasons of their own, two sets of people started to rekindle the urge for civil rights amongst the people impliedly, if not directly, via the media of asking for social reforms in the Indian society on the one hand, and the adoption of a more liberal attitude by the colonial government towards issues dear to Indians like freedom of press, and so on, on the other. While the first set of people consisted of those having sincere concern for indigenously conceptualised social reforms in India so as to secure the human and livelihood rights for the hitherto marginalised sections of the society, the second category of people included a number of Indians as well as the Westerners who looked upon the British government to bring about the necessary positive transformations in the society and the polity of the country.

The pioneering efforts leading to the eventual germination of the civil rights movement in India appeared to have come from the relentless social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Having strong critical faculties right from his childhood, Ram Mohan Roy's powerful training in Indian scriptures on the one hand, and his deep erudition of English moral and political literature on the other, ingrained in him a unique blend of critique and creation on almost everything obscurantist and anti-liberal in the Indian society and polity.

Consequently, Ram Mohan Roy became one of the bitterest critics of the redundant religious rituals denigrating the civil rights of all people in general, and those of women in particular.

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Advancing a well-reasoned plea for the abolition of cruel and inhuman practices like *Sati*, he presented a comprehensive outline of reforms to ameliorate the condition of women in India. He decried the general environment of violence against the rights of women and called for eradicating all such social practices like polygamy, child marriage, *devadasi* system, and so on, which appeared to have denigrating effect on the dignity and respect of women. Moreover, providing creative solutions to the problems facing women in India, he advocated a number of progressive measures like widow remarriage, equal rights of women to property and fixation of a ripe age of marriage for women. Though most of such ideas of Ram Mohan Roy seemed to be much ahead of his time and, therefore, could not bear fruit so soon, two positive outcomes of his efforts remain remarkable. One, with the support of the humanist Governor Generals like William Bentick, he indeed succeeded in stamping out the most heinous crimes against humanity in terms of the abolition of the *Sati* system by 1823. Two, irrespective of the successes or failures of his efforts, he was able to arouse the passions of other humanist elements in the Indian society who picked up from where he left and, thus, kept the flame of the struggle for civil rights alighted throughout since then in the country.

Besides waging a sustained struggle for the rights of women, Ram Mohan Roy also strived hard for the protection of the civil and political right of Indians. Hence, despite holding the colonial rule in India in high esteem, he did not hesitate to take on the British government at least on two occasions when he found the moves of the government infringing upon the civil and political rights of the natives. First, in 1823, when the British attempted to curb the freedom of press in the country by putting unreasonable restrictions on it, Ram Mohan Roy happened to be one of the most vocal opponents of such a move and called for freeing of press from all draconian and unreasonable regulations passed by the colonial government. Second, the move on the part of the British Parliament to introduce certain discriminatory and illogical provisions in the Indian judicial system aimed at compromising the civil liberties of Indians, also earned the vehement ire of Ram Mohan Roy. Opposing the insertion of a clause by the Jury Act of 1827 which envisaged that 'natives, either Hindu or Muslims, are subject to judicial trial by Christians, either European or native, while Christians are exempted from being tried either by a Hindu or Muslim juror,' he

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campaigned forcefully against it. Not only that, he submitted a petition against this piece of legislation, signed by both Hindus and Muslims, in the two houses of the British Parliament arguing for the abandonment of such a discriminatory legislation. In a nutshell, it may be argued that the idea of civil rights movement in India appears to have found its genesis in the thoughts and actions of Ram Mohan Roy. His passion for the protection and promotion of civil rights of various sections of the society, in particular women, probably inadvertently began a wave upon which the subsequent movements for civil rights may have been built up in India.

As argued earlier, the genesis and growth of civil rights movement in India seem to be enmeshed in the various socio-religious reform movements championed by great social reformers from time to time. Indeed, the exhibition of concern for the civil rights of individuals by leaders of the national movement came quite late. As an expert notes,

> ...in fact, civil liberties of individuals, within the concern of India's liberation struggle, manifested itself as late as in the 1930s when Nehru started the Civil Liberties Union to provide legal aid to the freedom fighters accused of treason. The Congress Party, only at its Karachi session of 1931, passed the first resolution demanding civil liberties and equal rights for citizens. (Ray 2003: 3411)

Therefore, in order to have an unbroken sequence of growth of civil rights movement in India, it is important to critically grasp the civil rights elements in the socio-religious reform movements waged in the country during the late second half of the nineteenth and the early first half of the twentieth century.

In the realm of socio-religious reform movements, Bengal happens to be the pioneering state. Drawing upon the lead given by the torchbearers of European Renaissance in India like William Carey and Joshua Marshman, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar waged relentless struggle for the uplift of the social status of certain sections like women. They not only tried to protect the civil rights of these people by calling for the abolition of inhuman social and religious practices that unleashed untold miseries on them, they also tried to persevere for the protection of their civil rights by empowering them through the medium of education and generating awareness amongst them for their rights and responsibilities in society. The social reformers

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in Bengal received immense support and help from a number of western social reformers and educationists such as David Hare, Sister Nivedita and Darezio, as also certain humanist British officials like the Governor General Lord William Bentick in getting their efforts eventually bearing fruit.

While in Bengal, the social reform movements drew their intellectual inspiration from the European Renaissance, in Maharashtra, they appeared predominantly, if not exclusively, out of an indigenous awakening amongst the people having a vision for the amelioration of the miserable condition of the masses. For instance, though remaining quite active in the affairs of the Indian National Congress (INC), Justice M.G. Ranade founded the Indian Social Conference (ISC) in 1887 precisely for the purpose of working towards the realisation of a dignified and respectful life for the socially disadvantaged sections of the society by eradicating the socio-religious practices violating the civil rights of such people. The mundane understanding of the problems facing people, by Justice Ranade, induced him to conceptualise such conditions of life for people where the enjoyment of civil and political rights is supplemented by the adequate availability of the social, economic and cultural rights to the people. Another formidable social reform movement in Maharashtra, having deep-rooted implications for the growth of civil rights movement in the country, was launched by Jotiba Phule under the auspices of *Satyashodhak Samaj* to seek the protection and promotion of the civil rights of the people belonging to the oppressed castes.

Early leads for the growth of civil rights movement in India also came from the various socio-religious reform movements initiated in various parts of south India. Prominent amongst such movements appears to be the movement launched by Sri Narayan Guru for sanskritising the norms and customs of the Irava community in Travancore (Shah 1990: 110). Yet, numerous other socio-religious movements were also launched in different parts of the region which sought to either protect or promote the socio-religious rights of the hitherto marginalised sections of the society belonging to lower castes.

The other socio-religious reform movements having pointers for the growth of civil rights movement in the country included the ones spearheaded by Arya Samaj of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the Ramakrishna Mission of Swami Vivekananda and the Aligarh

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School founded by Syed Ahmad Khan. These were basically religious reform movements having repercussions on the social standing of the people as well. Thus, while the first two movements worked hard to reform the Hindu society, the last one was aimed at bringing about some sort of awakening amongst the Muslim society. The impact of these movements was remarkable in bringing about a perceptible social awakening amongst the masses as a result of which they became vigilant warriors of demanding basic liberties from the colonial rulers.

The long span of anti-colonial movement in India, in a way, may be argued to be some sort of civil rights movement keeping in mind the demand of the Indians for bestowal of basic civil and political rights to the common people of India as the short term perspective and complete independence for the country as the long term vision of the nationalist leaders. However, such an argument has been countered by scholars on the plea that 'the mainstreamed intellectual and political discourse of the liberation struggle had its central focus around the nation as a community, initially against colonial rule, and later also against contesting groups like Muslims, Sikhs, Dalits and tribals as communities claiming nationhood' (Ray 2003: 3411). The argument further goes to emphasise the point that since the thrust of the nationalist leadership was not on the concern for the rights of individuals, as against the rights of nation as a community, it might not be justified to label the entire national movement as a movement for the securing of civil rights in the country.

Situated, thus, in the frame of civil rights of the individuals, the civil rights movement during the phase of the nationalist struggle appears to have taken shape only during the decade of the 1930s. The biggest impetus in this direction came in the form of the Congress adopting a comprehensive resolution on the theme of 'Fundamental Rights and Duties and Economic and Social Change' in 1931 at its Karachi session. The passage of this resolution was seemingly the culmination of a series of subtle moves made by the Congress to seek civil and political rights for the native people. For instance, while the Constitution of India Bill drafted by it in 1895 called for guaranteeing certain specified civil and political rights as the fundamental rights of the people in any future constitution for India, the Madras session of the Congress adopted a resolution calling for the inclusion of a Declaration of Fundamental Rights

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in the future constitutional arrangement for the country. Moreover, the various committees, like the Nehru Committee, in their reports categorically ingrained certain civil and political rights in the discourse of the freedom struggle in the country.

However, the institutional beginning in this regard was arguably made by the setting up of the Indian Civil Liberties Union (ICLU) in 1934, mainly at the behest of Nehru to ensure legal assistance to those freedom fighters who remained undefended while facing trial under the charges of treason. Functioning in a very limited and rudimentary fashion, the major activities of the ICLU remained confined to 'gathering information about violations of civil liberties, particularly regarding the conditions of prisoners and people in detention, police brutality, proscriptions on literature and restrictions on the press' (South Asia Civil Rights Documentation Centre [SAHRDC] 2000: 78). Nonetheless, the founding of ICLU marked the formal and distinct initiation of the civil rights movement in the country.

Unfortunately, the institutional experiment of the civil rights movement by way of ICLU started facing rough weather from various quarters. Though the initial euphoria created by the setting up of ICLU led to the formation of a number of civil liberty unions like the Bombay Civil Liberties Union, the Madras Civil Liberties Union and the Punjab Civil Liberties Union, such enthusiasm remained only ephemeral. The real challenge to these unions came with the inauguration of Congress led provincial governments in 1937 under the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935. Loud noises made by certain Congress leaders in support of civil and political rights of the people started being lost in the din of governance dynamics. When such betrayal of a noble cause was exposed and objected to by the ICLU and other such unions, they came in direct conflict with the powerful vested interests in the Congress party. Subsequently, growing tension between the ICLU and the Congress led governments found its articulation in the founders of the ICLU arguing for the redundancy of the bodies like ICLU, at a time when the country has got some sort of self-rule. Eventually, with the support and patronage from its founders being withdrawn due to seemingly autonomous and vigorous style of functioning of the body, the ICLU could not sustain itself for long and met with an untimely demise. In the final analysis, the experiment of ICLU exposed the hypocrisy of some of the Congress leaders in espousing the cause of civil and political rights of the people vehemently as

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long as they remain outside the corridors of power, and becoming the willing partner of the colonial government in grossly violating the same rights when absorbed in the ruling dispensation of the time.

An analysis of the development of civil rights movement during the phase of nationalist movement in India reveals two interesting features having a powerful influence on the march of the movement in the post-independence times. First, despite having a very rich and ancient tradition of the enjoyment of some sort of civil rights, if not the ones identical to the modern ones, the nationalist leaders in the country appeared more prone to look at the western, more particularly the British liberal traditions of civil rights to argue for the same to be given to the native people by the colonial rulers. Consequently, the entire discourse of civil rights during the freedom struggle boiled down to only the civil and political rights, as in the case of the western countries, to the marginalisation, if not total exclusion, of the social and economic rights of the people which might have gone to create a more socially egalitarian and economically equitable order in the post-independent times. Second, and more importantly, the concern of many, if not all, of the nationalist leaders for civil rights of the people seemed to be more cosmetic than deep rooted. In other words, arguing for civil rights of the people as one of the intellectual high points from which to browbeat the colonial rulers as an overall package of their anti-colonial strategy, the leaders very conveniently forgot the struggles waged and the promises made for guaranteeing certain basic fundamental rights to the people once they came to power in the country. The empirical evidences to substantiate the dismal record of the leaders on the front of protection and promotion of civil rights are galore, right from the establishment of first Congress led ministries in the provinces in 1937 through the interim government of Jawaharlal Nehru to the functioning of various democratically elected governments even in the post-independent times.

TRADE UNION MOVEMENTS

Trade union movements in India apparently began with the establishment of a number of factories in the port cities of the country during the second half of the eighteenth century. Initially, the workers working in such factories were unorganised and, therefore,

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not in a position to raise their voices against the intolerable working conditions and highly inadequate wages paid to them. The responsibility of raising the issues concerning the workers—such as their working conditions—remained confined to the seemingly philanthropic pursuits of certain public spirited individuals. For instance, when the idea of trade union movement was somewhat alien to India, the issues like pathetic working conditions of the workers were taken up by individuals such as S.S. Bengalee who argued for the intervention of the colonial administration to improve working conditions in the factories. However, such activities were more in the nature of persuasions on the part of certain individuals without any discernible impact on the owners of the factories or on the government to compulsorily work towards meeting such demands of the people.

The genesis of the trade union movements may be traced back to the sporadic strikes evidenced in certain railways and textile establishments during the second half of the nineteenth century. However, there is no unanimity amongst the scholars as to the exact date or event which might be construed to be the beginning of the labour movement in the country. For instance, while some scholars take the strike of the textile workers in Bombay in 1882 as the beginning of the labour movement in the country (see Karnik 1966), others argue that the move of K.M. Lokhande in calling a meeting of the workers and submitting a memorandum to the President of the Clothe Mill workers in Bombay in 1890 initiated the labour movement in India (see Morris 1966). However, the honest pursuits of Lokhande to get the condition of the workers ameliorated led to the formation of the first labour organisation in the form of the Bombay Mill Hands Association in the same year by him. Subsequently, a number of labour organisations were formed in various parts of the country to highlight issues concerning the interests of workers and adopted mild methods of protest for improvement in working conditions and better wages. Hence, the labour movement remained in the hands of the public spirited non-working class people even till the end of the First World War.

The scene of the trade union movements underwent rapid transformations in India in the post-war times, partly due to the adverse impacts of the war on the industrial scenario of the country. Moreover, with the increasing refinement in the production methods of the industries, there emerged a new class of skilled

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and literate workers whose apparent clamour for having some sort of organised bodies to air the grievances of the workers created propitious conditions for the rise of trade unions in the country (Mukherjee 1955: 240). Interestingly, during this time, the national movement which had started gaining mass character under the influence of unique Gandhian strategies, did not appear to champion the cause of workers in the same way it did in the case of peasants, presumably due to the miniscule mass of the working class in the country. Yet, the dynamics of the national movement did not leave the field of working class untouched and it led to the infusion of the values of mass struggle amongst the workers unions. Moreover, with the setting up of the first registered trade union in 1918 in Madras under the leadership of B.P. Wadia seemingly prepared the ground for the ensuing turnaround in the trade union movement in India.

The dawn of the 1920s gave birth to a number of subtle transformations in the nature and strategy of trade union movements in India. With the aim of enlisting support of all sections of the society to broaden the base of the national movement, leaders like Tilak and Lajpat Rai made frantic efforts to integrate the workers with the national movement by opening the national trade union centres. Further, in order to give an all-India character to the trade union movement in the country, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was set up in Bombay in 1920 under the leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai who probably redefined the discourse of trade union movement by arguing for class consciousness amongst the workers, inculcation of the ideal of international proletarian outlook and the rooting of nationalism in the class consciousness of the workers (Dange 1973: 10). Gradually, the AITUC emerged as the conglomerate having affiliations of approximately 200 trade unions which gave it sustenance to argue for the passage of a number of ameliorating legislations by the colonial government to improve the working conditions and wage structures of the workers.

Further radicalisation in the trade union movement in India was facilitated with the infiltration by the communist elements in a number of unions including the AITUC leading to ideological incongruence in AITUC. The growing communist influence in AITUC-led moderates like V.V. Giri and others to quit AITUC, and also the formation of a new body called Indian Trade Union Federation in 1936. However, the ideological tussle continued

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within the AITUC with the communist elements taking a more radical stand on the issue of the Civil Disobedience movement arguing that the bourgeoisie dominance over the Congress party renders it unfit to fight for the cause of the workers. Yet, the hold of nationalists on AITUC did not allow the communists to have their say in the functioning of the body which led to their resignations from the body to form a new body known as Red Flag Trade Union Congress.

Finding themselves in a slighted position after leaving AITUC, the communists rejoined the body with the determination to bring about further radicalisation of AITUC, even by remaining within it. Hence, due to tireless efforts of the communists, the hold of the nationalist leaders on the body started getting loosened and it started becoming highly radicalised. On the eve of the independence of the country, the AITUC had, by and large, been overwhelmingly dominated by the communists who infused a sense of uneasiness in the Congress leaders who expected the working class to play the role of a strong pressure group for the party. Hence, noticing the irrevocable hold of the communists over AITUC, Congress leaders decided on quitting this body and float another trade union body to be called as the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1947.

In the final analysis, it may be argued that trade union movements in India did not appear to be a formidable social movement ostensibly due to the fact that the country did not have a big industrial base which would have facilitated the rise of a massive working force in the country. Besides, the scattered industrial base in various parts of the country, presumably also did not allow for the rise of coordinated and concerted efforts on part of the leaders of the trade unions to organise any all-India strike or *bandh* in order to attract the attention of the government and the leaders of the national movement to integrate the demands of the workers in the charter of issues to be focussed on by the Congress party. Hence, even during the times when the Gandhian phase of the national movement shook all the sections of the society from their slumber to be an active participant in the national movement in order to serve the cause of the country as well as its own people, the trade union movements could not respond with the expected degree of vigour and vehemence. As a result, the trade union movements remained a sort of marginalised and fragmented social movement

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in the pre-independence times having only limited utility for and getting very negligible support from the mainstream national movement.

PEASANT MOVEMENTS

The predominantly agrarian character of the Indian society ensured that the country would experience a number of formidable peasant movements in both pre- and post-independence times. Such movements were caused primarily by way of protest against the exploitative policies rooted in the inequitable agrarian relations reflected in different forms over various phases in history. Initially, the peasant movements appeared to be localised in India, presumably owing to the varying degree of consciousness amongst the peasants on the one hand, and the variation in the intensity of exploitation under a particular revenue system, on the other. However, with the strengthening of the national movement in the country and the growing predominance of communist elements in the leadership of the peasant movements, the character and intensity of the peasant movements underwent a subtle transformation. Naturally, the peasant movements not only acquired some sort of all-India character with the formation of bodies like the All India Kisan Sabha, the intensity of the peasant movements became much more vehement, given the urge amongst them to bring about a revolutionary alteration in the agrarian relations in the country.

The study of peasant movements in India has inevitably had to grapple with the complexity of defining as to what constitutes a peasant (Shah 1990: 32). Structurally, the heterogeneous composition of the rural society in India ensures that different sections of the society draw their sustenance from land but in varying relations with it. In other words, despite having the common denomination of earning their livelihoods from land, the rural populace in India does not form a homogeneous entity with multitudinous differences, not only in terms of their primordial affinities but also in their relation to land as owners, cultivators, sharecroppers and numerous other relations. Moreover, even within a certain category, there exists quite remarkable variation. For instance, even the category of landowners differs in terms of the size of the holding they own, on the basis of which they are categorised as marginal, small,

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middle and rich landowners. Similarly, the non-owners of land also differ, as, some work only as agricultural labourers whereas others are tenants or even sharecroppers. Hence, irrespective of such variation, the notion of the peasant is ordinarily understood as consisting of all those people in rural India who earn their livelihoods from land.

Nature of Peasant Movements

Though India may be said to have a history of agrarian unrest for quite deeper past, such revolts started gaining prominence since the medieval times. For instance, during the Mughal period, localised peasant revolts were evident against the oppressive revenue policy and highhanded method of collection of land revenue by the state officials. However, peasant revolts began to become formidable with the move of the colonial government to alter the land use pattern in the country on the one hand, and experimentation with a number of anti-peasant land revenue systems in the country, on the other. Hence, for example, the Indigo revolt of 1860 was precisely in protest against the policy of forcible alteration in the land use pattern whereby the planters were compelling the farmers to grow commercial crops in the place of traditional food crops (Sen 1979: 162). What was unique about peasant revolts during the nineteenth century was that they, ordinarily, were meant to redress the grievances of the peasants on petty issues such as lowering of rent, remission or reduction in taxes or for grant of favourable occupancy tenure to them (Dhanagare 1983: 222–23).

With the deepening of the British rule and the increasing tinge of its exploitative policies in India, peasant movements underwent subtle transformations in terms of their vehemence and reach. Besides, with the arrival of the Gandhian strategy of mass movements to radicalise the Indian national movement, peasant movements not only started making telling impact on the colonial government but also became quite broad-based to gain a character of mass movement in them (Mehta 1979: 744). Thus, the successful peasant movements in the form of the Khaira unrest, Kheda movement, Champaran *satyagraha*, and so on, were illustrative of the changing character of peasant movements during the 1920s. In fact, these movements turned out to be the training ground for the

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prominent leaders of the national movement which helped a great deal in integrating the mass of peasants all over the country with the ongoing anti-colonial struggle in India.

During the decade of the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the peasant movement was strengthened by the participation of a number of left-oriented leaders who espoused the cause of an autonomous peasant movement in the country by way of formation of a pan-Indian peasant organisation. Consequently, the All India Kisan Sabha was formed in 1936, reflecting 'the new spirit of unity among Left-nationalists, Socialists and Communists' (Sarkar 1989: 339), on the one hand, and according an independent shape to the peasant movement vis-à-vis the national movement, on the other. As a result, the peasant movement, instead of getting engrossed into localised issues and demands, now evolved a pan-Indian perspective by putting forth general demands such as reduction in land revenue, minimum wages to agrarian labourers, abolition of *zamindari*, ownership of land to the tillers, distribution of surplus land amongst the landless farmers, and so on. Importantly, thus, with the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha, the peasant movement in the country received a new impetus as now, the issues specific to the agrarian society found their articulation in a distinct manner, over and above the issues of the national movement.

The relatively autonomous character and the increasing radicalisation of the peasant movement during the last phase of the national movement in India led to the growing revolutionary fervour amongst the peasants. They no longer seemed to be imbued with the Gandhian ideals of non-violence and *satyagraha*, and were prepared to start decisive struggles against the colonial administration as well as the native vested interests in the country. Resultantly, several significant peasant movements were evidenced during the period of 1946, the most notable of which appeared to be the Tebhaga and the Telengana movements. Presumably, these movements were, in fact, the demonstration of the increasing desperation amongst the peasants to get rid of the exploitative land revenue and taxation systems with the anticipated arrival of independence of the country in the near future. For instance, the Tebhaga movement was apparently the most formidable affront to the prevailing permanent system of land revenue in Bengal with slogans like '*Tebhaga Chai*' (want two-third of crops), manifesting the urge of the peasants for a two-third share in the total land

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produce, among others (Bandopadhyay 1998: 300). Similarly, the Telengana movement was predominantly a movement against absentee landlordism and exploitative land revenue system under the patronage of the *Nizam* of Hyderabad, with peasants demanding vesting of land to the tillers, and the confiscation and redistribution of excess land to the landless farmers (Ranga Rao 1978: 153).

In conclusion, thus, it appears that the onset of numerous peasant movements in India has been instigated by a distinct set of issues taking prominence at a particular period of time, though the basic character of all such issues remained enmeshed in the structure and functioning of the agrarian system in different regions. For instance, the early peasant revolts such as the Moplah rebellion of the 1920s in Kerala, and the Wahabi and Fairadi resurrections of the 1930s in Bengal were portrayed by some scholars as some sort of communal clashes.[22] Yet, it has been contended that more than a communal clash, it was a struggle between the Muslim tenants and the Hindu landlords (Panikkar 1979: 621). Hence, it is argued that the peasants revolted against the exploitation and oppression when their economic conditions deteriorated in primarily three forms: deterioration of their economic condition due to price rise, famine, and so on; structural changes which caused an increase in the exploitation of peasants, consequently deteriorating their condition; and rising aspirations of peasants to improve their condition (Shah 1990: 40).

LINGUISTIC MOVEMENTS

The rich heritage of linguistic diversity in India had also been a source of some acrimonious, if not irreconcilably antagonistic, parleys amongst various sections of people in both pre- and post-independence days. Indeed, it had been one of the most vexing issues facing the nationalist leaders in their efforts to evolve the nationalistic ethos amongst the masses in all parts of the country. Even during the making of the Constitution, as B.N. Rau wrote, 'one of the most difficult problems in the framing of India's new Constitution will be to satisfy the demand for linguistic provinces and other demands of a like nature' (cited in Austin 1966: 236). The section, therefore, seeks to present a synoptic account of the

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genesis and development of linguistic movement in India during the pre-independence days.

Linguistically, India has arguably one of the most diversified base amongst the plural societies of the world. In his comprehensive survey of the linguistic diversity of India, probably unmatched till date, George A. Grierson had enumerated 179 languages and 544 dialects being spoken in various parts of the country (for details, see Grierson 1967–68). Notwithstanding the doubts being raised by people like Nehru (1946: 121) on such linguistic surveys to portray India as a Babel of languages, there is no denying the fact that India is home to numerous distinct languages spoken by a vast majority of people. The majority, if not all, of the Indian languages derive their lineage from either of the two broad linguistic families of the Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian. Spoken in north, east and west India, and enriched in subtle and irrevocable ways by Sanskrit, the so-called language of Gods, languages such as Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, apart from others, stand out prominently as leading languages in India. Similarly, the languages deriving their parentage from the Dravidian roots and confined to well-defined geographical units are Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam acting as the mother tongue of the people of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, respectively. Thus, affording a sort of official recognition, the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India consists of these and some other languages, numbering 22 in all, recognising legally the linguistic diversity of India.

Genesis and Aspects of Language Movement in India

The linguistic plurality of India remained more an aspect of appreciation of the cultural diversity of the country than becoming an instrument of venting ones apparently parochial vernacular aspirations as late as the last decade of the nineteenth century. Bal Gangadhar Tilak is said to be the first person raising his voice to make language as the basis of the readjustment of administrative boundaries in India. His basic argument was that creation of linguistically homogeneous administrative units 'will facilitate the development of the people and the languages of the respective peoples' (King 1997: 59). However, the issue of language could

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enter the lexicon of the Congress by 1908 only, when it decided to create a distinct 'Congress province of Bihar' in the wake of the partition of Bengal and the concomitant movement on the issue. Interestingly, the first reference to language becoming a basis of administrative reconfiguration of government was acknowledged, though not acted upon, by the Montague–Chelmsford Report of 1918 (Gopal 1966: 66). Thus, by the first quarter of the twentieth century, language had been acknowledged by most, if not all, to be a factor on the politico-administrative horizons of the country.

Three distinct aspects of the linguistic movement during the pre-independence times may be identified. First, language was floated as an emotionally touchy and politically least controversial basis for getting a linguistically homogeneous geographical unit being carved out of the spatially mammoth and culturally plural administrative divisions called British provinces. Thus, the use of language as a political tool resulted in the creation of the first linguistic province of Orissa in 1936 out of the Bengal Presidency (for details, see Patra 1979). Second, in the course of growing clamour for strengthening the forces of unity in India, a subtle move was initiated by the proponents of Hindi to make it the national language of the country. Taking it as an affront on the linguistic autonomy and cultural prosperity, the non-Hindi speaking people, particularly from south and most notably Tamil Nadu, opposed the move calling it as nothing less than Hindi imperialism. Exposing the centrifugal portents of the move of Hindi-enthusiasts in the Constituent Assembly, for instance, T.T. Krishnamachari said,

> ...convey a warning on behalf of the people of south for the reason that there are already elements in South India who want separation ... and my honourable friends in U.P. do not help us in any way by flogging their idea (of) 'Hindi Imperialism' to the maximum extent possible. (cited in Guha 2004)

Thus, over the years, the language movement in India took the form of formidable opposition to the assumed imposition of Hindi on the entire country in utter disregard of the linguistic plurality of the country.

Pointing out another significant aspect, rather, the 'ulterior motives' of the linguistic movement, King emphasises the caste and class interests acting as the forces behind the movement for linguistic provinces in India. Substantiating his argument with

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the case of Andhra Pradesh, he writes succinctly, 'Left unstated in this innocent formulation of the claim are the deep-rooted caste and class resentments of the Andhras. The leadership of the Andhra movement had attached itself to resentment of the putative Brahman monopoly on education, wealth, opportunity, and power in Tamil-dominated Madras' (King 1997: 70–71). The language movement, therefore, manifested a number of overt as well as covert dimensions in the body-politic of India in both pre- and post-independence times.

Responses to the Language Movement

In accordance with their distinct perspectives and circumstances, various leaders and bodies responded to the imperatives of the language movement distinctly. Circumstantial variations led the Congress to support the demand for linguistic states, giving up its initial inhibitions, for 'considerations, usually communal in nature' (King 1997: 62). The Nehru Committee Report of the All Parties Conference 1928 also called for the redistribution of provincial boundaries under a scheme in which 'the main consideration must necessarily be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned' (Motilal Nehru 1928). In his typical effort for communal unity in India, Gandhi viewed the response to the linguistic movement as an instrument of creating bond between Hindus and Muslims through the language called 'Hindustani,' 'a resultant of Hindi and Urdu, neither highly sanskritised nor highly Persianised or Arabianised.'[23] Jawaharlal Nehru, as is pointed out earlier, was not amused by the overbearing linguistic diversity of India, yet his response to the linguistic movement was on the lines of Gandhi. Additionally, while championing the cause of diversity in the sphere of languages, he tacitly supported the retention of English as the medium of communication on an all-India basis, unless an all acceptable alternative language could take the place of English. Finally, Ambedkar was also disposed towards the creation of linguistic states in order to promote the cultural diversity and national unity of the country (for details, see Ambedkar 1955).

In conclusion, the linguistic movement in India appears to be a fit example of the transformation of a purely cultural issue into

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a political one, once it starts reflecting the urge of one community to lord over the other. As Percival Spear (1961: 440–41) succinctly summarises the issue,

> ...the drive to make Hindi the national language offended the non-Hindi-speaking areas, and opposition to it tended to strengthen the demand for local units of administration where a local language could be used for state business. If you will force Hindi on us for national purposes, ran the argument, then you should let us use our own language in our own state.

However, in the course of time, with the creation of linguistic states and the evolution of three-language formula as the solution to the problem of linguistic diversity, the language politics no longer remains a viable unit of a mass movement in the country.

NOTES

1. Drawing the attention to the mass consternation on the Viceroy's remark that the proposed scheme of Pakistan was nothing but 'a counsel of despair', Benthall warned the government of adverse consequences not only in India but elsewhere if the Muslims were alienated.
2. India Office Records (IOR, henceforth) R/3/1/105, Wavell to Casey, 1 January 1945.
3. Ibid.
4.. Jinnah's statement in the *Dawn*, 21 September 1945. According to Jinnah, 'no attempt will succeed except on the basis of Pakistan and that is the major issue to be decided by all those who are well-wishers of India and who are really in earnest to achieve real freedom and independence of India, and the sooner it is fully realised, the better.'
5. IOR, R/3/1/105, V.P. Menon to Even Jenkins, the Governor of Punjab, 20 October 1945.
6. IOR R/3/1/105, Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 25 Ocotber 1945. Reporting on Jinnah's election campaign to the Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence, Wavell had expressed his 'uneasiness' about the confidence the Muslim had shown in securing Pakistan in the aftermath of the 1946 elections.
7. IOR R/3/1/105, the Governor of Punjab to Wavell, 16 August 1945. Jenkin, the Punjab Governor, was 'perturbed about the situation because there is a very serious danger of the elections being fought, so far as Muslims are concerned on an entirely false issue. Crude Pakistan may be quite illogical, undefinable and ruinous to India and in particular to Muslims, but this does not detract from its potency as a political slogan.'
8. Only a privileged 12.5 per cent of the total population and a mere 11 per cent of Muslims had the actual right of political choice. See Jalal (1985: 149).

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9. The Delhi resolution was accepted by the convention of Muslim League legislators on 9 April 1946. See Pirzada (1970: 512–13).
10. The Congress dismissed Jinnah's demand for parity because 'in numerical terms this meant the equation of minority with majority which was both absurd and politically impossible' (Mansergh 1999: 229). To this Jinnah retorted that 'the debate was not about numbers nor even about communities but about Nations. Nations were equal irrespective of the size' (Ibid). For details of Jinnah's argument, see Mansergh (1999: 227–30).
11. Jinnah's Presidential address in the 1940 Lahore session of the All India Muslim League (Pirzada1970: 337).
12. Jinnah always insisted that 'there are two major nations in India. This is the root cause and essence of our troubles. When there are two major nations how can you talk of democracy which means that one nation majority will decide everything for the other nation although it may be unanimous in its opposition.... These two nations cannot be judged by western democracy. But they should be treated as equals and attempts should be made to solve the difficulties by acknowledging this fact. Jinnah's press statement, *The Dawn*, 1 August 1946.
13. IOR L/I/1/777, confidential appreciation of the political situation, October 1946.
14. The press statement of Shyama Prasad Mookherjee, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 7 May 1947.
15. IOR L/PJ/8/655, Burrows to Mountbatten, 21 January 1947.
16. For an incisive exposition on the messianic aspect of tribal movements, see Fuchs (1967).
17. For a lucid analysis of the perspective of social reformers and nationalist leaders on women's issues, see Heimsath (1964).
18. A useful study of the role of important national leaders in fighting for the cause of women's interests is in Mazumdar (1976).
19. For a first-hand account of women's participation in this movement, see Ali (1991).
20. Gandhian perspective on the role of women in various aspects of Indian life, including the national movement, enriched the domain of the theory of Feminist Ethic. See Jain (1986).
21. For an illuminating account of the genesis, evolution and growth of women's movement in India, see Chaudhury (1993).
22. An illustrative study of this school is in Khan (1965).
23. *Young India*, 27 August 1925.

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17 Culmination of the British Rule and the Making of India's Constitution

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand the significance of the 3 June Plan and the India Independence Act 1947.
- To describe the basic features of the Constituent Assembly and the making of the Constitution of India.
- To elucidate the salient features of the Indian Constitution.

Seeking to lay out the background for the Constituent Assembly that drafted free India's constitution, this chapter focusses on two specific constitutional steps that the British government undertook just on the eve of the 1947 transfer of power. While the 3 June Plan set out the agenda for the transfer of power, the 1947 Indian Independence Act translated that into reality. Framing a constitution for independent India was not an easy task. Beginning with the 1942 Cripps Mission, the idea of involving Indians for drafting their constitution was being debated. Although the 1946 Cabinet Mission enthusiastically supported the formation of a constituent assembly to prepare the constitution for free India its members were convinced that 'a solution involving the partition of the Punjab and Bengal would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these Provinces' (Pylee 1963: 127). Nonetheless, the subcontinent was partitioned and two independent nations—India and Pakistan—were born in 1947. The Constituent Assembly for India met, for the first time, on 9 December 1946 and, in less than three years, the Constitution of India was produced and was adopted by the nation on 26 November 1949. Besides elaborating the processes that led to the making of the Constitution, the chapter draws on the socio-economic and political circumstances of the era and also the philosophical predilections of the founding fathers to delve into the riddle as to why India's Constitution incorporated some of the draconian provisions of the 1935 Government of India Act despite being opposed to it when it was introduced.

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THE 3 JUNE PLAN AND INDIA INDEPENDENCE ACT, 1947

At the end of the Second World War (1939–45), British politicians realised that the colonial rule in India could no longer be sustained. The Indian nationalists were dead against its continuation. International opinion was also in favour of decolonisation. The perspective in which the Indian question was so far articulated had thus radically changed. True to its pledge, the newly elected Labour government also responded to the situation in a very different way. Illustrative of their commitment is the announcement on 20 February 1947, where, Clement Atlee, the British premier, declared that 'His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take necessary steps to effect the transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948'.[1] Accordingly, Mountbatten, the last viceroy, was vested with all powers to devise an appropriate scheme to settle the Indian question. It was a difficult task. Nonetheless, the viceroy convinced both the Muslim League and the Congress leadership to agree to the partition of Bengal and Punjab, and also assured to complete the process by August 1947 instead of June 1948, as decided earlier. It was against this background that the 3 June Plan was prepared which involved 'at every stage a process of open diplomacy with leaders' (Mountbatten, quoted in Hodson 1969: 204). The Atlee government was determined to transfer power, as the 3 June Plan was unambiguous in stating that 'it has been the desire of His Majesty's Government that power should be transferred in accordance with the wishes of the Indian people themselves'.[2] It was also made clear that the responsibility of framing the constitution for independent India and Pakistan should rest with the people of the respective countries. As the government declaration further stated that,

> ...his Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that they have no intention of attempting to frame any ultimate constitution for India [or Pakistan]; this is a matter to be decided by the people themselves. Nor is there anything in this plan to preclude negotiations between communities for a united India.[3]

The plan made a provision for the constitution of two Boundary Commissions: one for Punjab and the other for Bengal and, if necessary,

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for Assam. In case of the award not being implemented before the transfer of power to the Government of Pakistan in August 1947, the plan provided for 'the notional partition' of the provinces of Bengal and Punjab, purely on the basis of demographic composition of the provinces. It further stressed that the Commission 'shall under no circumstances be conditioned by the provisional boundaries and instead look into the matter afresh.'[4] The 3 June plan guided the entire process of what finally culminated in the division of Bengal and Punjab.

The Indian Independence Act 1947 that formally transferred power to the people of India was introduced in the House of Commons on 4 July and received the Royal assent on 18 July. Drawn on the spirit of the 3 June Plan, the Act also recognised the independent existence of Pakistan along with India. Since partition was accepted by both the Congress and the Muslim League, it was rather easier for the British government to set out the terms and conditions for the transfer of power. Pakistan was created by bifurcating three Muslim-dominated British Indian provinces—two in the east, Bengal and Assam, and one in the west, Punjab. Sind, Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province were also to be included in the new state of Pakistan. As soon as the Independence Act was approved, the British government transferred its responsibility of governing the country to the new dominions. Similarly, the suzerainty of the British Parliament over the princely Indian states lapsed and with it, all the treaties and agreements between the British government and Indian rulers. This provision provoked criticism from the Congress and Nehru in his note of 3 July 1947 argued that 'the complete wiping out of all treaties and agreements in force at the date of passing of the Act will create administrative chaos of the gravest kind'.[5] Hence, he was in favour of endorsing the Cabinet Mission suggestion that 'pending the new agreements, existing arrangements in all matters of common concern should continue'.[6] The Muslim League hailed the Act just like the Hindu Mahasabha: while the League was happy because Pakistan was carved out, Hindu Mahasabha welcomed partition of Bengal, in particular, as it would give the Hindus an opportunity to govern themselves which was not possible given the demographic preponderance of Muslims in the erstwhile undivided province.

The Act set in motion processes that finally led to the transfer of power on 15 August 1947. Nonetheless, the 1947 Act remained

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an important statement on India's freedom from colonialism for two interrelated reasons: first, India's struggle for freedom led to a paradox of history because freedom was won with a heavy price in the form of partition of the country; second, this was an Act that despite being a formal declaration of the British withdrawal from India seemed to have translated into reality the British apprehension that imperial control of India was no longer tenable.

For the nationalists in India and Pakistan, the 1947 Indian Independence Act was not merely recognition of what they fought for, but also one of the foundational, perhaps most significant, pillars of freedom. The constitutional arrangement that the Act stipulated was respected by all despite being critical of some of the provisions. This itself is indicative of the extent to which British colonialism succeeded in warping the Indian minds in typical liberal tradition of the Westminster type. There were hardly scathing criticisms of the provisions of the Act; neither the Congress nor the Muslim League challenged the Act except seeking clarifications or offering technical suggestions for implementing some of schemes that the Act found appropriate for smooth transfer of power. The outcome of the Act was the inauguration of two new nations. India became free on 15 August 1947. A new era dawned and Jawaharlal Nehru captured that moment in his famous 'tryst with destiny' speech by saying that:

> At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suspended, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.[7]

THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND THE MAKING OF THE CONSTITUTION

The making of free India's constitution by the Constituent Assembly over a period of little less than three years is reflective of the efforts that the founding fathers undertook to translate the nationalist and democratic aspirations of an independent polity following

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decolonisation. Furthermore, while the Constitution is a continuity at least in structural and procedural terms, it was also a clear break with the past, since the 1950 Constitution drew on an ideology that sought to establish a liberal democratic polity following the withdrawal of colonialism. There can be no greater evidence of the commitment to constitutionalism and rule of law on the part of the founding fathers than the Constitution that they framed despite serious difficulties due to partition. The commitment to liberal democratic values, as the Constituent Assembly proceedings suggest, remained paramount in the making of the Constitution.

Set up as a result of negotiations between the nationalist leaders and the members of the Cabinet Mission over the possible constitutional arrangement in post-war India, the Constituent Assembly was not, it is argued, convened 'by any national provisional government but by the British government [to bring together] the delegates of the major political parties' (Chaube 2000: 49). The Assembly began its deliberations on 9 December 1946 and concluded with the passage of the Constitution on 24 January 1950. This period, slightly over three years, was one in which the joy of freedom was severely marred by national trauma, associated with the partition and violence that resulted in the killing of the Mahatma, besides the butchering of innocent people in the wake of the transfer of population in the immediate aftermath of the declaration of freedom. Indian Constitution was born, thus argues Paul Brass (2000: 60), 'more in fear and trepidation than in hope and inspiration.' This is partly true given the context in which the Constituent Assembly began and concluded its proceedings. The founding fathers, therefore, practised, as it has been appropriately suggested, 'the art of the possible and never allowed [their ideological cause] to blind them to reality' (Austin 1999[1966]: 21). The Constitution was thus a pragmatic response to the reality that the Assembly confronted while drawing the roadmap for free India.

The task of the Constituent Assembly was to draft a constitution for India. The objective resolution that Jawaharlal Nehru moved was, according to B.R. Ambedkar, 'an expression of the pent-up emotions of the millions of this country' (*Constituent Assembly Debates* [*CAD*] 2003a: 104). While defending the objective resolution, Nehru argued strongly for democracy and socialism: he strongly defended 'democracy' as the most appropriate system of government that 'fit in with the temper of our people and be

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accountable to them' (*CAD* 2003a: 62). Similarly, socialism, he firmly believed, would bring about economic democracy to India. For him, political independence was futile unless it was supported by democratic governance and socialistic vision. Hence, he was critical of the princely states that were reluctant to relinquish monarchy for democracy. As a true democrat who had no doubt that socialism was the ultimate solution for India's stark poverty, Nehru set the tenor of the discussion in the Assembly by providing a philosophical lay out for free India's constitution. Nonetheless, the political context in which the Constitution was being deliberated was full of uncertainty because of (*a*) Hindu–Muslim rivalry, and (*b*) reluctance of most of the princely states to join independent India. While the former led to the dismemberment of India following the British withdrawal in 1947, the latter necessitated threat or application of coercion, on occasions, to geographically unify India by bypassing the claim of the existing rulers of the princely states. By staying away from the Assembly, the Muslim members clearly stated their preference for Pakistan that gained momentum especially after the adoption of the 1940 Lahore resolution. The 1946 Calcutta and later Noakhali riots confirmed the Congress apprehension that it was possibly strategically correct to accept partition to avoid further bloodbath. What was clear when the Constituent Assembly met for drafting the constitution was that Pakistan was inevitable and a strong state was required to fulfil its socio-economic goals.

Defence for a Strong State

Despite being appreciative of India's pluralistic social texture, there was a near unanimity among the Assembly members for a strong state. Interestingly, the 1946 Cabinet Mission that influenced the deliberations in the Assembly to a large extent articulated a constitutional design by taking into account the principle of accommodating diverse socio-religious groups. Even those who were critical of the Emergency provisions also defended a centralised state to contain tendencies threatening the integrity of the country. Emergency provisions in the Constitution were justified because 'disorder' or 'mis-governance' endangers India's existence as 'a territorial state'. The fear of 'disorder' was probably the most critical

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factor in favour of the arguments for a centralised state despite its clear incompatibility with the cherished ideal of the nationalist leaders for a federal state. B.R. Ambedkar's contradictory stances on federalism, for instance, thus may appear whimsical, independent of the circumstances. In 1939, Ambedkar was clearly in favour of a federal form of government for its political viability in a socio-culturally diverse India (Ambedkar 1939). By 1946, he provided a radically different view by saying that 'I like a strong united Centre, much stronger than the Centre we had created under the Government of India Act of 1935' (*CAD* 2003a: 102). While presenting the final report of the Union Powers Committee, Jawaharlal Nehru also argued in favour of a strong state by stating that,

> ...we are unanimously of the view that it would be injurious to the interest of the country to provide for a weak central authority which would be incapable of ensuring peace, of coordinating vital matters of common concern and of speaking effectively for the whole country in the international sphere.[8]

As evident, federalism did not appear to be an appropriate structural form of governance in the light of the perceived threats to the existence of the young Indian nation. Hence, the constitution makers recommended for a strong centre because the constitutional design of a country is meant to serve 'the normative-functional requirements of governance'. The constitution was to reflect 'an ideology of governance' regardless of whether they articulate the highly cherished ideals of the freedom struggle that a majority of the Assembly members nurtured while participating in the freedom struggle. In the making of the constitution for governance, the founding fathers were guided more by their views on statecraft which would surely have been different without the traumatic experience preceding the inauguration of the Constitution in 1950. Hence, one can safely suggest that 'hard-headed pragmatism and not abstract governmental theories' was what guided 'the architects of our Constitution' (Bhattacharya 1992: 89).

Socialistic Pattern of Society

The constitution was to foster the achievement of many goals. Social revolution was one of them. It aimed to fulfil the basic needs of the

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common man and it was hoped that this revolution would bring about fundamental changes in the structure of the Indian society. The members of the Constituent Assembly did not work in a vacuum; they were members of the nation's parliament between 1947 and 1950, and they were also at the head of both provincial and union governments, and so they were aware of problems: food shortage, communal riots, and so on. 'The state', Jawaharlal Nehru thus argued, 'has become a dynamic state—and not a static state—in which administrators have to adapt themselves to the changes ... have to adopt methods to the changed conditions of work and the changed objectives of work.'

There were three possible ways: (*a*) the Left alternative—state is the owner of the means of production, (*b*) the Rightist alternative—the state shall not interfere, and (*c*) the mixed economy in which the state shall involve itself in ventures for 'public utilities' to ensure all-round development of the country. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first democratically elected premier, entrusted the state with the task of steering capitalist development in India seeking to ensure equitable distribution of wealth. It was 'an approach that sought to combine goals of growth and reduction of disparities, while avoiding the violence and regimentation of revolutionary change' (Frankel 2005: 3). It was, as Nehru characterised, 'a third way which takes the best from all existing systems—the Russian, the American and others—and seeks to create something suited to one's own history and philosophy' (Karanjia 2005: 3). Seeking to articulate the 'third way', the economic model that India adopted in the aftermath of independence was the model of state-led import substituting industrialisation.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India enshrined principles to lay the foundation of a socialistic pattern of society. The Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV of the Constitution) emphasise that the goal of the Indian polity is not unbridled *laissez faire* but a welfare state where the state has a positive duty to ensure to its citizens social and economic justice with dignity of the individual consistent with the unity and integrity of the nation. By making them fundamental in the governance and making the laws of the country and duty of the state to apply these principles, the founding fathers made it the responsibility of future governments to find a middle way between individual liberty and the public good, between preserving the property and privilege of the few and

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bestowing benefits on the many in order to liberate the powers of men equally for contributions to the common good.[9] In this model of state-directed development, the most significant instrument was the Planning Commission that came into being in January 1950, despite serious opposition of Gandhians within the Congress Working Committee (CWC). However, the cabinet resolution that finally led to the creation of the Commission underlined three major principles as special terms of reference in the preparation of the plans which largely defused opposition. These principles were: (*a*) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood; (*b*) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the country are so distributed as best to serve the common good; and (*c*) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment (Frankel 2005: 85).

Making of the Constitution

Yet, it was not the entire Assembly that wrote the document. It was clearly the hard work 'of the government wing of the Congress, and not the mass party' and the brunt of the task fell upon 'the Canning Lane Group [because] they lived while attending Assembly sessions on Canning Lane' (Austin 1999[1966]: 17, 317). There is another dimension of the functioning of the Assembly which is also instructive. According to Granville Austin, Indian's constitutional structure is perhaps 'a good example' of decision-making by consensus and accommodation, which he defends by examining the debates on various provisions of the Constitution (ibid.: 311–21). Scholars, however, differ because given the Congress hegemony in the Assembly, views held by the non-Congress members were usually bulldozed. As Shibanikinkar Chaube argued that at least on two major issues—political minorities and language—both these principles were conveniently sacrificed. As regards political minority, there was no consensus and the solution to the language was, as Austin himself admits, 'a half-hearted compromise' (ibid.: Chapter 12 [Language and the Constitution: The Half-hearted Compromise], 264–307). By dubbing the Assembly as 'a packed house', the shrunk Muslim League expressed the feeling of being alienated from the house. Even Ambedkar underlined the reduced importance of the

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Assembly since on a number of occasions, as he admitted, 'they had to go to another place to obtain a decision and come to the Assembly.'[10]

Decision by consensus may not be an apt description of the processes of deliberation. But, as the proceedings show, there was near unanimity on most occasions and divisions of opinion among the Congress party members who constituted a majority, were sorted out politically. As Ambedkar admits,

> ...the possibility of chaos was reduced to nil by the existence of the Congress Party inside the Assembly which brought into its proceedings a sense of order and discipline.... The Party is therefore entitled to all the credit for the smooth sailing of the Draft Constitution in the Assembly. (*CAD* 1999a: 974)

If the informal discussion failed to resolve the differences, 'the Assembly leadership ... exercised its authority formally by the Party Whip' (Austin 1999[1966]: Chapter 12 [Language and the Constitution: The Half-hearted Compromise], 315). As evident, in the Constituent Assembly, no attempt was made to force decision, the accent bring on unanimity presumably because 'the leaders were alive to the fact that the constitution adopted on the principle of majority vote would not last long' (Kothari 2005: 107). It was not, therefore, surprising that Rajendra Prasad (1949), the president of the Constituent Assembly, preferred to postpone the debate and allow them to work out agreed solutions rather than take a vote that might, as he apprehended, result 'in something not wanted by anybody.'

Two important points emerge out of the preceding discussions: first, the making of the Indian constitution was a difficult exercise not only because of the historical context but also due to the peculiar social texture of the Indian reality that had to be translated in the constitution. The collective mind in the Assembly was defensive as a consequence of rising tide of violence taking innocent lives immediately after partition. Second, the founding fathers seem to have been obsessed with their 'own notion of integrated national life'. The aim of the constitution was to provide 'an appropriate ordering framework' for India. As Rajendra Prasad (1950) equivocally declared on the floor of the Assembly, 'personally I do not attach any importance to the label which may be attached to it—whether you call it a Federal Constitution or a Unitary Constitution or by

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any other name. It makes no difference so long as the Constitution serves our purpose'. On the whole, a unitary mind produced 'an essentially unitary constitution doused with a sprinkling of permissive power for a highly supervised level of constituent units' (Bhattacharya 1992: 103).

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CONSTITUTION

The renowned constitutional lawyer of the country, Nani Palkhiwala, once remarked that India is a third class democracy with a first class constitution. However, irrespective of the class of democracy we seem to have made of India, it is quite promising to note that the Constitution of India has, more or less, stood the test of time more than five decades of its functioning, the credit for which needs to be given to the vision and farsightedness of the fathers of the Constitution. Indeed, the Constitution of India appears to be the classic example of a masterpiece of legislation whose operationalisation, no doubt, happens to be the worst of its kind; yet, owing to the inherent resilience of the 'basic structure of the Constitution', no attempt to either subvert its provisions or use it as a means to attain selfish and parochial purposes by the leaders of the country could cast aspersions on its utility and longevity. Resultantly, the salient features of the Constitution remains not only intact, their dynamism to cope with any eventuality has come out to be one of the strongest features of the Constitution.

Preamble

The Preamble is often referred to as the soul of the Indian Constitution, providing a key to its letter and spirit. Delineating the core concerns of the polity in independent India, the Preamble seeks to express a solemn resolve which becomes the guiding light for the posterity in the country. Though the framers of the Constitution were sagacious enough to ingrain all the vital values underpinning the Indian polity in the Preamble, the government of Indira Gandhi, amended the original Preamble to the Constitution by inserting the words 'Socialist' and 'Secular' along with the original Sovereign, Democratic, Republic as well as 'Integrity' along with the original

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Unity of the nation, through the Forty-Second Amendment on 18 December 1976.

As amended in 1976, the Preamble, unambiguously, exemplifies the broad contours of Indian political life and serves a number of useful purposes, for, the expressions used in it connote certain fundamental aspects of the polity from which there is no escape for the various stakeholders in the political life of the nation. First, though the use of the phrase, 'We, the people of India', may appear customary, its implications are far reaching for a nascent and fragile nation like India, marching on the unchartered path of democratic governance with competing hopes and aspirations from diverse quarters of the society.

Thus, by establishing the sovereignty of the people, the Preamble reduces all other units of governance in the country to a secondary position, robbing them of any possibility of usurping the powers of other units as well as organs of government. At the same time, it also implies that the powers which are given to the government in India, are sourced not from the states or any section of society or the former rulers of the Indian states but from the people at large, as a result of which no section of the people can challenge its authority and contend that it is not bound by the authority of the state because it has not accorded its consent to it. More importantly, since the states of the Union were not the party in the creation of the Union, which was created by the people of India, they cannot claim a right of secession from the Union. Therefore, the Preamble not only affords a stable democratic polity for the nation but also solidifies the unity and integrity of the nation.

Second, the Preamble puts in black and white the nature of polity in the country which must conform to the hard earned ideals of sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. Needless to say, the nature of the Indian polity would have been different from what it is today, had the words 'Socialist' and 'Secular' not been added to the original Preamble. While sovereignty affords a respectful place of pride to India in the comity of nations, the ideal of democratic republic manifests the basic outline of the nature of polity, guaranteeing the people the fundamental right of choosing their representatives to foster democratic governance in the country. Unavoidably, the mention of India becoming a republic becomes a compulsive requirement in view of the previous incarnation of India as a British Dominion whose head of state would have been

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the British monarch. Hence, by making India a republic, the framers of the Constitution carried out a crucial, if not total, break from the British suzerainty, even if nominal in practical terms.

Third, the Preamble presents a wish list outlining the aspirations of the people which they expect the government of India to secure for them. Spelt out in terms of justice, equality and fraternity, these ideals act as the benchmark to guide the policies and programmes of the government in future to cast India into the mould of a welfare state. Leaving no room for ambiguity on the dimensions of justice, the Preamble demarcates that justice needs to be in terms of social, economic and political, to be construed in the broadest sense of the term so that the nature of state in India does not become lopsided.

The framers were quick enough to supplement the ideal of justice with that of the ideal of equality of status and opportunity to provide for the holistic framework of an egalitarian society in India. In the meanwhile, the Preamble does emphasise the promotion of fraternity amongst the citizens by assuring the dignity of the individual in society. Aware of the propensity of certain sections of society to advocate the subordination of individual dignity to the cause of farcical societal interests, the framers did not mince words to clarify that societal good could be ascertained only by ensuring the individual good in the society. Thus, the framers wished to create a social democracy in India, which as Ambedkar (quoted in Agrawal 1998: 15) elaborates:

> ...means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity which are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality; equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity.

Fourth, the Preamble makes it amply clear that the unity and integrity of the country is a precondition for the other cherished ideals to become reality in the scheme of things in an independent India. Discounting any scope for tampering with the unity and integrity of the nation, the essence of the letter and spirit of the Preamble conclusively bars all the stakeholders in the nation, be it the individuals, group of people, the state or any other entity, from casting aspersions on the unity and integrity of the country, in case of which

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the people of India and/or the government of India are enjoined to safeguard the unity and integrity of the nation.

Finally, the utility of the Preamble is discerned in its serving as a beacon light to the higher courts in the country that are called upon to discharge the grand duty of interpreting the Constitution. At the times of interpreting a controversial law or constitutional provisions, where the meaning of the law in point is not clear or ambiguity or uncertainty prevails in the minds of the constitutional lawyers or the judges, the only reference point left to the court is the language of the Preamble through which they persevere to mark out real intention of the framers of the Constitution. It is argued that the Preamble is the repository of the spirit of the Constitution and, hence, the only reference point for those engaged in interpreting constitutional provisions should be the ideals embodied in it.

Looking at the vitality of the Preamble in the Constitution of India, it would be pertinent to analyse the position and sustenance of the Preamble. On the question whether the Preamble forms the part of the Constitution or not, the incontrovertible position of the Supreme Court, since the Keshvanand Bharti Case, has been that the Preamble is very much a part and parcel of the Constitution.[11] Further, as the former Chief Justice of India, M. Hidayatullah (1982: 51) points out:

> Preamble resembles the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, but is more than a declaration. It is the soul of our Constitution which lays down the pattern of our political society which it states is sovereign, democratic republic. It contains a solemn resolve which nothing but a revolution can alter.

Fundamental Rights

The inclusion of a detailed scheme of fundamental rights in the Constitution marks the culmination of a long and sustained desire of Indians to be bestowed with the basic liberties of free and happy life. Indeed, the formation of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 was, among other things, aimed at ensuring the same rights and privileges for Indians that the British enjoyed in their own country (Austin 1999[1966]: 52–53) though the first systematic demand for fundamental rights came in the form of The Constitution

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of India Bill 1895 (for details, see Rao 1965). The Bill stipulated to secure to all the citizens freedom of speech and expression, right to personal liberty, inviolability of one's house, right to property, equality before law, equality to admission to public offices and right to petition for redress of grievances. However, the idea of Indians being called as the citizens of India was still absent, even in the minds of the prominent Indian leaders, including the leaders of the Congress, who in the wake of the publication of the Montague–Chelmsford Report, impressed upon the British Government for declaration of the rights of the people of India 'as British citizens'. The echo of demands of Indians for certain fundamental rights was also heard in the draft of the Commonwealth of India Bill, formulated by the National Convention under the inspiration of Mrs Annie Besant in 1925.

Thereafter, numerous resolutions were passed and committees were appointed to put forth the perspectives of Indians on the nature and scope of the fundamental rights, aspired by the people of India.[12] Significantly, the Cabinet Mission Plan, while accepting the demand for the Constituent Assembly and the necessity of a written guarantee of fundamental rights in the Constitution of independent India, suggested the appointment of an Advisory Committee on the Rights of Citizens, Minorities and Tribal and Excluded Areas, bestowed with the responsibility of preparing a list of fundamental rights and also to suggest their inclusion in the Union List or the State List. Afterwards, the major boost for the provisions of fundamental rights came with the introduction of the Objectives Resolution by Jawaharlal Nehru. While adopting the Resolution on 22 January 1947, the Constituent Assembly solemnly dedicated itself to draft a Constitution for the governance of India wherein shall be guaranteed and secured to all the people of India, justice, social, economic and political; equality of status, of opportunity and before law; freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality. In the light of the perspective provided by the Objective Resolution, the Constituent Assembly formed the Advisory Committee for reporting on Minorities, fundamental rights and on the tribal and excluded areas under the chairmanship of Sardar Patel and consisting of 53 other members. Streamlining its functions, the Advisory Committee, in turn, set up five sub-committees, one of which was vested with the responsibility of suggesting the blueprint of

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fundamental rights for independent India. The draft report of the sub-committee, accompanied by explanatory notes on various clauses of the outline of fundamental rights, was circulated to its members who came out with insightful inputs on these clauses and after consolidation of the views suggested by the members, the final report of the sub-committee was submitted to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on 16 April 1947.

The final shape to the provisions on fundamental rights was given by the Advisory Committee. Basing its formulations on the recommendations of the sub-committee, the Advisory Committee agreed on the desirability of dividing the rights into justiciable and non-justiciable rights, thereby paving the way for compartmentalisation of the erstwhile fundamental rights into two distinct categories of Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principle of State Policy. At the same time, even within the sphere of fundamental rights, it was decided to bestow certain rights upon all persons while few rights were to be guaranteed to the citizens only, though the application of the rights was extended to all the states of the country. The report of the Advisory Committee was accepted and adopted by the Constituent Assembly which by way of creating two chapters—III and IV—made provisions for the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, respectively.

Originally, the Constitution contained seven fundamental rights. But the right to property was repealed in 1978 by the 44th Constitutional Amendment during the rule of the Janata Government, reducing these rights to six only, which are classified so: Right to Equality (Articles 14–18), Right to Freedom (Articles 19–22), Right against Exploitation (Articles 23 and 24), Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25–28), Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29 and 30), and the Right to Constitutional Remedies (Article 32). These rights have been protected against undue infringement by the state excepting certain specific circumstances provided under the Constitution, though their amendability has been upheld by the Supreme Court under Article 368 of the Constitution in the Keshvanand Bharti Case.

Described, along with the Directive Principles of State Policy, as the conscience of the Constitution, by Austin, the fundamental rights arguably constitute the soul of the Constitution. However, in

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material terms, as pointed out by Nani Palkhiwala, they constitute the anchor of the Constitution and provide it with the dimension of permanence. The Constitution envisages the fundamental rights as the common platform on which divergent political ideologies and practices may meet. They provide the iron framework within which experiments in social and economic changes may be tried out (cited in Mahajan 1984: 70).

These rights, therefore, have been given a very esteemed position in the constitutional law of the country, for, all laws in force in the territory of India immediately before 26 January 1950 and all legislations enacted thereafter, have to conform to the provisions of Part III of the Constitution.

Moreover, the scope of the fundamental rights are wide enough to encompass practically all those rights which human ingenuity has found to be essential for the development and growth of the personalities of the citizens of the country. Significantly, the focus of attention of the framers in this regard was on the citizens mainly, if not exclusively, as many of these rights are not guaranteed to aliens. For instance, the rights contained in Article 15 (Prohibition of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them), Article 16 (Equality of opportunity in the matters of public employment), Article 19 (Right to Freedom) and Article 29 (cultural and educational rights) are available to citizens only. Nevertheless, the best part of the provisions on fundamental rights is the fine-tuned machinery to guarantee these rights in practice, as under Article 32, the Supreme Court is given the original jurisdiction to entertain the petition of a person whose fundamental right has been infringed and is empowered with various writs which can be issued to secure the enjoyment of these rights.

Despite being taken as the bedrock of democratic life in the country, the fundamental rights have not been made absolute since several reasonable restrictions have been placed on their enjoyment. Set to secure public good on the one hand, and the unity and integrity of the nation on the other, reasonable restrictions can be imposed, specifically in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, morality, health, and so on, and for the protection of the interests of any scheduled tribes. Though these restrictions, no doubt, appear to be an attempt on the

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part of the framers to strike a balance between individual liberty and social good, in the course of the functioning of the Constitution, it was rightly apprehended that the state might, under the garb of reasonable restrictions, put undue infringement on the enjoyment of these right. Consequently, the endeavour of the Courts in the country has been to put a rigorous check on the reasonableness of the restriction, as and when they are imposed to curtail the rights of the people. Proclamation of a state of emergency provides another circumstance when the enjoyment of fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Article 19 may be suspended. Similarly, Article 33 empowers the Parliament not to grant some of the fundamental rights to the persons employed in the armed forces.

Reasonable restrictions notwithstanding, the fundamental rights appear to be big restrictions on the legislative, executive and, to some extent, judicial powers of the state. In making laws, the legislatures must see to it that such law does not in any way infringe any of the fundamental rights guaranteed to the people, for, if such law as a whole or any part of it is found inconsistent with any of the fundamental rights, it would be declared null and void by the competent court. More precarious is the position of the executive authorities who bear the brunt of the Court when they are found to be acting in an unconstitutional manner. The Soharabuddin fake encounter case of Gujarat in the year 2008 has proved to be the undoing of several senior IPS officers of the state. The same canon of constitutional propriety applies to the judiciary also as no decision which is in contravention to the provisions of fundamental rights can be pronounced by any court in the country, for, if such a decision is delivered, it is bound to be set aside by the higher courts. More importantly, the restrictions of the fundamental rights do not apply only on the state agencies but on private individuals and organisations also. For instance, Article 17 stands for the abolition of untouchability, Article 15(2) prohibits the disability of any citizen in the use of shops, restaurants, wells, roads and other public places on account of his religion, race, sex, or of birth, and Article 23 bars the practice of *begar* or forced labour in any form. Thus, the state, in addition to obeying the Constitution's negative injunctions not to interfere with certain citizen's liberties, must fulfil its positive obligation to protect the citizen's rights from encroachment by society (Austin 1999[1966]: 51).

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Directive Principles of State Policy

The provision of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution was the culmination of the humanitarian and socialist ideas nurtured by a majority of the leaders of national movement who aspired for not only a political democracy for India but also socio-economic democracy. Crystallising in the 1931 Karachi resolution of the INC, the leaders made a constitutional declaration of social and economic policy in the recognition of the vision of a welfare state in place of a regulatory state in the colonial mould. Ideally, the Karachi resolution must have led to the incorporation of the declaration of social and economic policy in the form of justiciable fundamental rights but the stark reality of insufficiency of economic resources and overbearing prevalence of conservatism in the society, at the time of framing the Constitution, appeared to have dissuaded the framers to make the social and economic ideals the justiciable fundamental rights. The way out, therefore, seemed to place the social and economic ideals in the form of directive principles, which though non-justiciable, would remain fundamental in guiding the state policy. Borrowed from and patterned on the Irish Directive Principles of Social Policy, these directive principles also sounded attractive to the framers due to their long standing proximity with the Irish nationalist movement. Later on, when it came to fine-tuning the various directive principles, other shades of cherished ideals like Hindu mythological beliefs and Gandhian ideas of social and economic reconstruction, along with secular socialist perspectives on Indian society, also found adequate reflection in the final list of the directive principles.

Placed in Part IV of the Constitution (Articles 35–51), the directive principles signify the positive obligations of the state towards its citizens, for, as Article 37 envisages that though not enforceable by the Court, they are nevertheless fundamental in the governance of the country and it shall be the duty of the state to apply these principles in making laws. Thus, two fundamental issues arising on the nature of the directive principles relate to their legal status in the Constitution as well their position vis-à-vis the fundamental rights. As regards the legal status of these principles, the vision of the framers was crystal clear that these principles would not be justiciable in the sense that the fundamental rights are, though,

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they would not be mere proclamation or the pious wish list only. As K.C. Markandan (1987: 147–48) argues:

> Far from being a proclamation or promulgation of principles, the directive principles constitute a pledge by the framers of the Constitution to the people of India and a failure to implement them would constitute not only a breach of faith with the people but would also render a vital feature of the Constitution practically a dead letter.

Notwithstanding the long drawn controversy on the constitutional status of the directive principles, a perusal of various principles reveal interesting features regarding the scope and diversity of the directive principles. As pointed out earlier, the provision of directive principles afforded various shades of perspectives an opportunity to provide their ideals a place in the Constitution, which is there in the main. First, a substantive number of directive principles is aimed at the establishment of a welfare state by bringing about a subtle socio-economic transformation in the country. For instance, Article 38, broadly defining the core content of the directive principles, envisages that the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by effectively ensuring a social order in which justice—social, economic and political—shall pervade all the national institutions in the country. The other directive principles of this sort pertain to the equitable distribution of material resources in society, welfare of women and children, equal pay for equal work, improving conditions of work, free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14, and so on.

Second, a large number of directive principles aspire to implement the Gandhian principles of social life, such as the establishment of village *panchayat*s, cottage industries, uplift of the conditions of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, prohibition, improve the breeds of cattle, and stop the slaughter of cows and calves, and so on.

Finally, certain directive principles deal with the streamlining of governance in the country and promotion of international peace. Thus, while the directive principle on the separation of judiciary from the executive is aimed at streamlining the governance in the country, the directive principles relating to the securing of international peace and security, maintenance of good and honourable relations between nations, fostering respect to international

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law and treaty obligations, and settlement of international disputes by arbitration and other peaceful means are meant for the global peace and tranquility.

Federalism

While deliberating to decide on the shape of independent India, the framers of the Constitution seemed to be in a somewhat dilemmatic situation, not owing to differences amongst themselves but due to the incongruity in their past experiences, present set-up and the future prospective scenario of the country. Historically, owing to the vast diversity in the spatial character of the country, coupled with the localised structure of society and economy, as well as the dispersed structure of political authority, both the people and the local governments had enjoyed considerable degree of autonomy for a very long period of time till the establishment of British rule in the country. Adept at running a unitary government at home, the British rulers, in an urge to tighten their grip over the whole country, ruptured the existing order to replace it with a highly centralised colonial administration. Caught in this paradoxical past and the present, the framers were called upon the devise a system for the country which would serve the future polity on a satisfying and durable basis.

Apart from the previous experiences, the state of things at the time of independence, particularly concerning the unity and integrity of the nation, also weighed heavily in the minds of the framers while settling down on the shape of things for independent India. Though there was no doubt that the country would be accorded a decentralised system of governance, there existed certain discordant notes on the extent of decentralisation. For instance, while agreeing that the Union Government should collect revenue and then distribute it among the states, the members vehemently urged for an increased share of revenue for state governments. Thus, as Austin reveals, the most singular aspect of the drafting of the federal provisions was the relative absence of conflict between the 'centralisers' and the 'provincialists', for, the framers had embraced the doctrine of 'cooperative federalism' as the guiding spirit of the Indian federal set up (Austin 1999[1966]: 186–87).

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Ultimately, the final shape of the provisions on federalism emerged to be typically Indian with no parallel in any of the Constitution in the world. Structurally, the Constitution definitely created a federal polity in the country but the provisions were also made to create such a strong central government that the labelling of such a system as a federation would have appeared improper. The Constitution, therefore, branded India as a 'Union of States', instead of a federation, the technicality of which was explained by Ambedkar as such:

> The Drafting Committee wanted to make it clear that though India was to be federation, the federation was not the result of an agreement by the states to join in a federation, and that the federation not being the result of an agreement, no state has the right to secede from it. The federation is a Union because it is indestructible. (*CAD* 2003c: 976)

Moreover, operationally, as he explained, it would be:

> A federal Constitution inasmuch as it establishes what may be called a Dual Polity (which) … will consist of the Union at the Centre and the States at the periphery, each endowed with sovereign powers to be exercised in the field assigned to them respectively by the Constitution. (ibid.)

Still, the Constitution avoided the 'tight mold of federalism' in which the American Constitution was cast so that it could become 'both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of time and circumstances' (B.R. Ambedkar, in *CAD* 1999b: 33–34).

Thus, though the framers of the Constitution were clear in their perceptions of the nature of federal polity in India, as expressed in the famous description of Rajendra Prasad (1950), 'Whether you call it a federal Constitution or a unitary Constitution, or by any other name ... it makes no difference so long as the Constitution serves our purpose', legal luminaries could not resist the temptation of unearthing the strong unitary features inherent in the Constitution and give a distinct nomenclature to it as per their own understanding of the Indian federation. Descriptions like 'quasi-federal' (K.C. Wheare), 'federal state with subsidiary unitary features' (Ivor Jennings) and 'paramountcy federation' (K. Santhanam) were provided apparently to negate the federalising characteristics of the Indian Constitution than to put them in the

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right perspective. In sum, therefore, it appears that the fathers of the Constitution in India devised an altogether new notion of federalism, which as Livingstone (1956: 6–7) has pointed, though in some other context, should be known by its functional dynamics than its institutional orientation.

Parliamentary System

The system of parliamentary democracy, which informs all the institutions of governance in the country, did not become the crowning glory of the Constitution all of a sudden or without serious debate and discussion in the Constituent Assembly. Indeed, the roots of the demand for a parliamentary system of governance in the country may, arguably, be traced back to the early twentieth century, when Indians persistently demanded the establishment of parliamentary institutions on the pattern of British polity to afford an opportunity to them to associate themselves with the governmental activities in the country. Though the colonial rulers had consistently refused to accede to the wishes of the natives on the ground of the unsuitability of the Indians to run such kinds of institutions on the one hand, and undesirability of parliamentary institutions, as such, for India, on the other, the longings of enlightened Indians for some sort of parliamentary system to be established in the country became progressively hardened with every refusal of the British India Government for the same. Afterwards, in most, if not all, of the documents proposing the model of political set up for independent India, like the Nehru Committee Report, the Sapru Report, the Draft Constitution of Free India published by the Socialist Party and the Hindu Mahasabha as well as by individuals like M.N. Roy, the argument for a parliamentary system of government figured prominently as the ideal model of governance for India after independence.

However, when the Constituent Assembly set on to decide the kind of political institution for the governance of the country, more than the lust, if not infatuation, with the parliamentary system, the urge to devise a mechanism which would foster a rapid socio-economic revolution, weighed in the minds of the framers more dominantly. Having decided in favour of rapid evolution, as against violent revolution, as K. Santhanam put it, the obvious

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question before the framers, as Austin reveals, was: what form of political institutions would foster or at least permit a social revolution? As Austin informs further, two competing systems of political institutions were available to the framers to opt for: first, looking back into the nation's rich heritage and finding indigenous institutions capable of meeting the country's needs, the framers would base the Constitution on the village and its *panchayat*s and erect upon them a superstructure of indirect, decentralised government in the Gandhian manner; and second, opting for the Euro-American constitutional traditions, reflected in the form of parliamentary system, though it means continuing in the direction the country had taken during the colonial period (Austin 1999[1966]: 27–28). Reminiscent of the old liking of the Indians for parliamentary institutions, the Constituent Assembly's decision in favour of the latter option was arrived at with overwhelming majority, with only one member raising a voice in favour of village *panchayat*s, though the broad contours of his scheme of things also appeared to be in the mould of representative democratic governance.

Explaining the rationale behind the choice for a parliamentary system, Jawaharlal Nehru, speaking in the Lok Sabha on 28 March 1957, said:

> We chose this system of parliamentary democracy deliberately; we chose it not only because, to some extent, we had always thought on those lines previously, but because we thought it in keeping with out own old traditions, not the old traditions as they were, but adjusted to the new conditions and new surroundings. We chose it—let us give credit where the credit is due—because we approved of its functioning in other countries, more especially in the United Kingdom.[13]

Further, providing a more deep-seated account for the adoption of parliamentary system by the Constituent Assembly, Austin (ibid.: 39–49) points out four compelling reasons. First, the alternative of *panchayat* based system of governance, rooted in the Gandhian frame of analysis, did not find favour with the framers, as 'the Congress had never been Gandhian' on the one hand, and the near universal acceptance of the parliamentary system as the *fait accompli* for the country by all sections of Indian society, on the other.

Second, the commitment of many members of the Constituent Assembly to Socialism also emboldened the pursuits to go for a

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parliamentary system, for, socialism and democratic government were taken as supplementary to each other. Holding that democratic constitution could not survive without a subtle move to secure social and economic equality, majority of the Indians, with the probable exception of the Communists, held the view that 'there could be no socialism without democracy' which could be ordained by the parliamentary system of governance.

Third, the immediate challenges, posed to the well-being of people on the one hand, and the unity and integrity of the country, on the other, also tilted the balance in the favour of parliamentary system. At the time of the inauguration of Interim Government in September 1946, the livelihood of people was threatened due to famine-like conditions in many parts of the country, rising food prices, precarious grain reserve and a clash of interests between the surplus and scarcity provinces. Similarly, the threat to the unity of the nascent nation came from rising communal passions in the wake of Direct Action Day call by Jinnah, the reluctance of a few princely states to join the Indian Union and the Communist rebellion in regions like Telangana. The cure to these ills was considered to be lying in the parliamentary system, as only that could afford a fair degree of centralisation of powers in the hands of the central government without compromising with the structure and functioning of democracy in the country.

Finally, the unflinching faith of the members of Assembly in the need for universal adult franchise as the basic factor to herald social revolution in the country also weighed decisively in the favour of parliamentary democracy, as the parliament so elected was construed to represent the people as a whole, ensuring representation to all sections of the society and fostering the socio-economic revolution to usher true democratic governance in the country.

Amending Procedures

The issue of amending procedures of the Constitution happened to be one of the least debated and controversial issues dealt with by the Constituent Assembly due, probably to the less importance attached to it by the members on the one hand and the lack of adequate knowledge and 'immediate experience' amongst the

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average members of the Assembly, on the other. Barring a few customary references in the reports like Nehru's and Sapru's as well as in the draft Constitutions of K.M. Munshi and K.T. Shah, K.M. Panikkar, and so on, a well thought out scheme of amending procedures was not available to the framers till mid-1947, when B.N. Rau presented his framework of amending procedure, providing for two fold procedures for amending the Constitution. First, the amendments should first be passed by a two-thirds majority in both houses of Parliament and then ratified by a like majority of provincial legislatures. Second, the transitional provisions may be amended by simple majority in Parliament. However, the main dilemma before the framers was, presumably, to reconcile between the competing allurements of amending the Constitution by simple majority to keep the Constitution dynamic, living, serving the needs of the society with the changing times and circumstances on the one hand, and making its amending procedure rigid enough to thwart any frivolous attempt to alter the basic framework of the federal polity of the country. After due deliberations on the practices followed in the American, the Australian and the Irish Constitutions, the Constituent Assembly agreed to provide for a threefold method of amending the Constitution under the provisions of Article 368, drawing appreciation from the experts like K.C. Wheare, who complimented the framers for striking a balance by protecting the rights of the states while leaving the rest of the Constitution to be amended easily (Wheare 1988: 143).

Labelled as 'one of the most ably conceived aspects of the Constitution' (quoted in Austin 2007: 264), the provisions under Article 368 appear to be able to meet the aspirations of the framers to make the Constitution a living document while making it extremely difficult to rob it of its basic characteristics. Of the three methods of amending the Constitution, two have been specifically provided for in Article 368 whereas the third has been provided for in about 22 other articles. Thus, first, the Constitution can be amended by introducing an amending Bill in either house of Parliament which needs to be passed by a majority in each house with two-thirds of the members present and voting, after which it is sent for the Presidential assent, at the receipt of which it becomes an amendment.

The second method relates to the Articles enumerated under the proviso to Article 368, items (a) to (e), dealing with the subjects of the method of election of the President of India, distribution of

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legislative powers between the Union and the states, extent of the executive power of the Union and the states, representation of the states in Parliament, provisions relating to the Supreme Court and the High Courts, and the amendment of the Constitution itself. To amend any of these Articles, the amending Bill is not only to be passed by a majority of total membership in each house and majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting in each house but also ratification by at least one half of the state legislatures.

Third, the Constitution can be amended by a simple majority vote in the two houses of Parliament, followed by the assent of the President. The basic precepts, with which this provision deals with like formation of new states, alteration of state boundaries, changing name of states, delimitation of constituencies, qualifications for citizenship, quorum in Parliament, and so on, to name a few, are to remain in force until the Parliament brings about changes in them. Though a formal amendment in all such cases is not effected, yet they have the effect of making changes in the constitutional law.

In view of the overt provisions made in Article 368 on the methods of amending of the Constitution, a subtle debate emerged amongst scholars regarding the scope and nature of Parliament's power to amend the Constitution. One school of thought, rooted in legal positivism, contended that, owing to the elaborate provisions made in the Constitution, the Parliament must confine itself to what is provided for in this regard, without any attempt to derive implied powers of amendment. Responding, in a way, to the provisions of Article 13(2) which bars the state from making any law which takes away or abridges the Fundamental Rights, the other school of thought holds that the amendment of the Constitution should be viewed in the context of the requirements of socio-economic needs of the country, instead of the strict legal provisions provided for in this regard. These two contrasting, if not conflicting, views on the amendability of the Constitution have found their reflection in the ongoing game of one-upmanship between the Parliament and the Supreme Court, even till today.

The Executive System

As for many other things, the Constitution of India, by providing for a distinct system of Executive in the Indian political system may, arguably, be taken to have made an innovation of sorts, for,

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despite being designed on the pattern of the British parliamentary system, a number of marked modifications have been made to make it suitable for Indian requirements. Ordained to fit into the mosaic of socio-economic and politico-strategic peculiarities called 'India', the Executive system is enriched by several features drawn from Constitutions, other than the British, as the major, if not whole, set of operational circumstances, for the Executive in India is different from that of Britain. For instance, the homogeneous and unitary characters of British society and polity, respectively, are markedly different from the heterogeneous and federal features of Indian society and polity, requiring a different set of operational parameters for the Executives in the two countries. Thus, though rooted in the broad spectrum of the British parliamentary democracy, the Indian Executive system departs from that of the British in terms of an elected head of state in the form of President in place of a hereditary monarch, supremacy of the Constitution instead of the supremacy of Parliament, and overbearing authority of the Supreme Court to test the constitutionality of the executive orders and parliamentary enactments as against the final authority of Parliament in all matters of constitutional disputes. The Indian executive system, in later years, turned out to be the model for a majority, if not all, of the developing countries who were looking for a suitable system of governance, different from the straight-jackets of the western countries, for them after getting independence.

Under the Constitution, the office of the President has been made analogous to that of the British Monarch in keeping with the spirit of the parliamentary executive, which the country has drawn from the latter, albeit with certain modifications in the form, not the substance of the cabinet government. Moulded in the frame of the ceremonial head of state, though the office of the President is an exalted one with enormous prestige, authority, grace, dignity, respect and adoration, its utmost utility lies in remaining as the constitutional head, without even an iota of activism in *realpolitik*. The repositing of all the Executive powers of the Union in this office (Article 53) has been based on the assumption of the President remaining a rubber stamp of the government to authenticate the decisions taken by the Council of Ministers, barring a very few cases ordained by circumstances. In fact, in the Constituent Assembly, at one point of time, when there was the talk of affording the President with some discretionary powers, the major concern of

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the members was not with the extent of those powers but with the provision of formidable checks to deter him from usurping the powers and functions of other functionaries of the government (Austin 2007: 118–32). All attempts by different Presidents to adorn an activist role, therefore, met with strong denouncement not only by the Council of Ministers but also from constitutional luminaries of the country.

Keeping in view the position of the President in theory and practice, various conditions of his office have been provided for in the Constitution. Thus, though any Indian with 35 years of age and eligible to be elected to the Lok Sabha is entitled to contest for the office of the President, in reality, only persons with either exceptional qualities and stature or having the blessings of the leader of the majority party in Parliament have entered the august office. Similarly, the mode of election for the office of President is indirect, that is, through an electoral college consisting of the elected members of both houses of Parliament and the elected members of the state legislative assemblies, where the vote is calculated according to a formula devised by N.G. Ayyangar (ibid.: 122) to give just weight to the provincial population. Elected for a term of five years, with an entitlement for reelection, no President, except Dr Rajendra Prasad, has been reelected to office, thereby setting a convention of sorts that the President should not be reelected to the office. Finally, the President may be removed from office by the process of impeachment, on charges of violation of the Constitution. Thus, though various aspects of the office of the President have been so designed as to contribute to his figurehead and ceremonial position by providing for a cumbersome process of his removal from office, the Constitution has ensured him a stable tenure so that he can function without fear or favour in the exceptional cases when he may be required to take a position that is unpleasant to the party in power.

Calling him the Chief Executive of the Union (Article 52), the Constitution vests the Executive powers of the central government in the President, to be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him, in accordance with the Constitution (Article 53). In this capacity, the President has been accorded such a central position in the governance of the country that each and every significant institution and functionary stated in the Constitution is directly or indirectly attached to him. Though the

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various organs of the government have been given distinct status and functional space by the Constitution, an organic link amongst them has been sought to be established through the office of the President. The powers and functions of the President, therefore, underpin each and every vital activity of the state in India.

The Executive powers of the President primarily mean the execution of the laws enacted by the legislature and the power of carrying on the business of government as well as the administration of the affairs of the state (Basu 1989: 163). The core of the Executive functions of the President appears to be the appointment, in accordance with the prescribed procedure, of high dignitaries of the state including the Prime Minister, other ministers of the Union, the Attorney General, the Comptroller and Auditor General, Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, Governors and other civil, military and diplomatic officials of the Union. He has also been designed to the Supreme Commander of the armed forces and diplomatic business of the country is conducted in his name.

Amongst his integrative functions, legislative and judicial functions stand out. Made an inalienable part of Parliament, he is vested with the power to summon the sessions of each house of Parliament, prorogue the houses and dissolve the Lok Sabha. More importantly, he can address both the houses at certain occasions and send messages to either house of Parliament, apart from nominating 12 members to the Rajya Sabha and two members to the Lok Sabha. The criticality of the President's legislative powers lies in his giving assent to the bills passed by Parliament to give them the status of law and prior recommendation to the money bills. Similarly, the power to issue ordinances when the Parliament is not in session allows the President to don the mantle of a legislature in certain cases. Judicially, the President is vested with the power to grant pardon, reprieve, respite or remission of punishment and suspend or commute a sentence of a person. Significantly, he can also refer any matter of constitutional law to the Supreme Court for advice, which, otherwise, is not binding on him.

Exceptionally, the President is conferred with enormous emergency powers, to be exercised in (*a*) a situation arising out of war, external aggression or armed rebellion (Article 352), (*b*) failure of constitutional machinery in a state (Article 356), and (*c*) financial emergency (Article 360). Though envisaged precisely to defend the security and unity of the country, the provision under

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Article 352 was put to flagrant misuse in 1975 by Mrs Indira Gandhi for her selfish interests. Similarly, the provisions under Article 356 have been made to meet out a typical situation in a state which, unfortunately, have also been remorselessly misused by successive governments at Centre, resulting into the demand for scrapping this Article. Financial emergency, luckily, has not been imposed till date, signifying the soundness of the financial structures and processes in the country.

A glimpse at the powers and functions of the President with a non-holistic perspective of the constitutional vision may lead a novice to draw misplaced conclusions about him. What, therefore, becomes indispensable is that the actual position of the President must be clarified immediately after elaborating his constitutional powers and functions. Hence, as Ambedkar succinctly pointed out in the Constituent Assembly,

> ...under the Constitution, the President occupies the same position as the king under the English Constitution. He is the head of the state but not of the executive. He represents the nation but does not rule the nation. He is the symbol of the nation. His place in the administration is that of a ceremonial device on a seal by which the nation's decisions are made known. (*CAD* 1999b: 974)

Echoing this, Article 74(1) envisages that there shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the Head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice to settle fully and finally the position that the President can never think of acting without the aid and advise of the Council of Ministers.

However, a few Presidents, beginning with Rajendra Prasad, who not for 'entirely personal' reasons but with a view 'to enable the Presidency to assume authority and continuity, should the nation, or more particularly the Union Government, ever undergo political upheaval' (Austin 1999[1966]: 141–43), sought to attribute vastly greater powers to the office of President than ordained by the Constitution and act in slightly independent manner. Unexpectedly, Prasad's spar with Nehru 'strengthened the Constitution by establishing the firm precedent that within the Executive the cabinet is all powerful' (ibid.: 143), as both A.K. Ayyar and Attorney-General M.C. Setalvad reasoned out against the contention of Prasad. After almost 40 years, in 1987, President Giani Zail Singh, presumably

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for more personal than constitutional reasons, for the first time since the inauguration of the Constitution, used the unknown tool of pocket veto to withhold his assent to the Indian Post Office (Amendment) Bill passed by Parliament. He, however, restrained himself from taking any more untoward step, thereby avoiding any sort of constitutional crisis in the country. Barring these two aberrant situations, the constitutional position in the country seems to have been conclusively dovetailed by transplanting the British Constitution into the Indian constitutional matrix.

The Prime Minister

In contrast to the ceremonial position of the President, the Prime Minister happens to be the real Executive in the parliamentary governance of the country. Indeed, amongst the constitutional offices which have attained immense power and authority in the Indian political system, the office of the Prime Minister figures out prominently. True to the spirit of parliamentary system, the Constitution accords the prime position to the Council of Ministers in the Executive framework of the country under the headship of the Prime Minister, to ward off the probability of the Executive system turning into a one man show of the Prime Minister and emphasises the collective nature of responsibility of the government. Still, functionally, the system metamorphosed into ensuring a leading position to the Prime Minister and the collective responsibility of the Cabinet (Pylee 1963[1965]: 345). Presently, from being the first among equals, the Prime Minister has become the pivot or the lynchpin of the whole system of government, which crumbles with the crumbling of the Prime Minister, though too much depends upon the political hold of the Prime Minister on his party, and his political and administrative acumen in perceiving and responding to situations way ahead of others.[14]

Judiciary

Like several other institutions under the Constitution, the judicial system of the independent India appears to be a compromise between the two distinct perspectives of judiciary under the

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parliamentary and federal systems of government. Since, for obvious reasons, India could not have become a unitary system of polity, had the colonial rulers tried to introduce some semblance of a federal structure, including a Federal Court to stand at the apex of the judicial system within the country. However, the adoption of the parliamentary system of government based on its functional dynamics in Britain, conditioned the extent to which the federal institutions in the country could have been afforded strength and operational autonomy. In other words, under the classical notion of the federal system like in America, the Supreme Court should have been accorded some sort of supremacy amongst the three organs of the government owing to its position as the protector of the Constitution and the people's rights. On the other hand, the imperatives of the parliamentary system as in Britain require the highest court to be in a subservient position to the Parliament since the latter is construed to be the sovereign authority in the political system of the country. Now, since the Indian political system was designed to be a halfway mark of both the federal as well as the parliamentary systems, the judicial system of India was bound to be an amalgam of certain features prevalent in both the countries. But, how far the judiciary might be permitted to imbibe the characteristics of the two systems to suit the requirements of the Indian polity was the million dollar question bothering the minds of the members of the Constituent Assembly.

Placed, thus, in a piquant situation, the members of the Constituent Assembly aspired to idealise the Courts for the two plausible reasons of giving force to the fundamental rights and acting as guardians of the Constitution itself (Austin 1999[1966]: 164). This idealism guided the framers to design for an independent judiciary in the realm of which 'the powers of the Supreme Court and judicial review' (ibid.) emerged as the key issues that loomed large in their minds. The tone and tenor of the judicial system of the country was decided to be in the mould of the one found in the federal political systems with a strong and independent Supreme Court vested with the responsibility of not only maintaining the sanctity of the federal nature of the polity by keeping the constitutional provisions intact in this regard but also protecting the fundamental rights of the people as the beacon of the modern democratic life. The only concession, presumably given to the ethos of the parliamentary system in the country, was in terms of the fetters put on the Court's

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power of judicial review where the rights to property and personal liberty were concerned. Rooted in the desire to facilitate the onset of a social revolution on the one hand, and reiterate the recurrent theme of unity in the Constituent Assembly, on the other, the marginal circumspection of the powers of Supreme Court seemed to be an effort to make the judicial provisions of the Constitution congruent with the broad contours of parliamentary democracy in the country, lest the supremacy of the judiciary becomes absolute, attaining alarming proportions in the absence of a well-placed system of checks and balances as are found in the Presidential system of government.

The issue of the independence of the judiciary was so paramount in the minds of the framers that, as Austin complains, they showed disproportionate concern with the administrative aspects of the judicial system, with the tenure, salaries, allowances and retirement age of judges, with the question of how detailed the judicial provisions of the Constitution should be and more pertinently with the mechanism for choosing judges, though with the pious desire to insulate the courts from attempted coercion by forces within or outside the government (Austin 1999[1966]: 176). Following the blueprint envisaged by the Sapru Committee and the recommendations of its own *ad hoc* Committee, the Constituent Assembly broadly agreed to devise such provisions as are prudent in the circumstances peculiar to India, irrespective of their prevalence in Britain or America, to secure the independence of the judiciary. For instance, rejecting the British method of appointment of the Lord Chancellor as too unsupervised, and the American system of confirmation of judicial appointments by Senate as open to politics, the Assembly provided for the appointment of the judges by the President after due consultations with the stipulated judicial officers. The questions of the tenure, salaries and future employability of the judges were also answered on the similar lines.

A remarkable point that arose in the context of the durability of the constitutional provisions safeguarding the independence of Judiciary was their amendability by the Parliament in later years as part of some political manoeuvring. The Assembly addressed this issue by entrenching the provisions on judiciary amongst those provisions of the Constitution whose amendability was made the toughest by providing that, among other things, the amendment of such articles would require the approval of not less than one-half

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of the legislatures of the states, in addition to the passage by both the houses of Parliament by a two-third majority in each case. Later on, in judicial pronouncements, the independence of the judiciary was included as part of the basic structure of the Constitution, making it almost an unamendable part of the Constitution.

Anticipating the demerits of dogmatising the independence of judiciary in ascertaining a cordial and interdependent functioning of the three organs of government, the general mood in the Constituent Assembly was in favour of putting things in perspective, if not to undermine it. Echoing the popular sentiment of the members of the Assembly, Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar pointed out that,

> ...while there can be no two opinions on the need for the maintenance of judicial independence, both for the safeguarding of individual liberty and the proper working of the Constitution, it is also necessary to keep in view one important principle. The doctrine of independence is not to be raised to the level of a dogma so as to enable the Judiciary to function as a kind of super-Legislature or super-Executive. (*CAD* 2003b: 837)

Couched, therefore, in the guise of social revolution, the powers of the Supreme Court, specially its power of review in cases of right to property and personal liberty were not only circumscribed but also made to obliterate in the times of Emergency when the courts' power of issuing writs get curtailed to a great extent and the Executive's functional domain gets widened enough to suspend the enjoyment of the fundamental rights by the people. Within the framework of a unified integrated judicial system, the Constitution provides for the establishment of courts at the central, states and the district levels, with the Supreme Court standing at the head of the system.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The Constituent Assembly drafted the constitution in the context of great uncertainty especially in view of the partition that bifurcated India into two sovereign nations, India and Pakistan. What is striking is the fact that the Constitution survives more than six decades by adapting to the changed socio-economic circumstances. Except for two years, during the 1975–77 Emergency, the Constitution

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remained pivotal in India's governance. It is true that though the Constitution bears the imprint of the imperial 1935 Government of India Act, it is substantially different in terms of the spirit that propels its functioning. Although the basic structure remains unaltered, the Constitution has grown in its size as it is amended to address new demands. The Constitution may not have fulfilled the aspirations of the founding fathers in its entirety. What is striking is its success in inculcating a sense of loyalty among large sections of India's demography.

Furthermore, in the changed environment of globalisation, the Constitution remains as critical as before in setting the tenor for contemporary Indian politics. This shows the strength of the Constitution which is also transcendental in nature. What draws our attention is the growing importance of some major constitutional institutions in shaping governance. For instance, the founding fathers identified the President as merely ornamental and made Parliament the most powerful. In contemporary India, this is just reversed: Parliament has declined given the compulsion of coalition politics while the President has, on occasions, emerged as the most critical institution to avoid crisis in governance. Similarly, the Election Commission has acquired a new status in view of a trend towards making election clean and fair. It is true that the role of these institutions is reinvented in the changed socio-economic and political milieu. What is equally interesting to note is the fact that these institutions derive their strength from the provisions of the Constitutions at the same time. Here lies the validity of the claim that India's Constitution is a living document, which, due to its organic link with the prevalent socio-economic circumstances, continuously redefines its nature and contour to appear meaningful and relevant even after the lapse of several decades since it was inaugurated.

NOTES

1. Prime Minister, Atlee's statement in the House of Commons, reproduced in Menon (1993 [1963]: 507[Appendix IX]).
2. Statement made by His Majesty's Government on 3 June 1947, reproduced in Menon (1993[1963]: 510[Appendix X]).
3. Ibid.
4. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, 8 June 1947.

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5. A note by Jawaharlal Nehru, 3 July 1947, reproduced in Menon (1993 [1963]: 4 [Appendix XII]).
6. Ibid.
7. Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Tryst with destiny' speech, delivered at the dawn of independence in India on 15 August 1947, quoted from Rao (2004: 558–59).
8. Report of the Union Powers Committee, 20 August 1947 (*CAD* 1999a: 58).
9. Articles 38 and 39 spell out the sentiments. Article 46 underlines the concern for the weaker sections, including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.
10. *Hindustan Times*, 27 November 1949.
11. *Keshvanand Bharti v. State of Kerala*, (1973) 4 SCC, 225, paras 94–98, p. 324.
12. For a historical perspective on the evolution of the demands for fundamental rights in India, see Austin (1999[1966]: 52–75).
13. *Hindustan Times*, 29 March 1957.
14. The point can be borne out by comparing the Prime Ministerships of Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh. Despite the common constitutional sanction, there exists a drastic difference between the two in terms of their authority over the whole system of government on account of their differing political hold over the party. For a general review of the personal and political dynamics of the Prime Minister in the functioning of the government, a useful though dated work is Venkateswaran (1967).

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Conclusion

I

The book is about Indian political thought. We have picked up representative thinkers who put forward different perspectives within, of course, the broad nationalist framework. By focussing on the distinctive contribution of these thinkers, the book is an eloquent testimony of diverse views suggesting the richness of the nationalist discourse in India. The primary goal of the nationalist exercise was certainly freedom from foreign rule and nationalism remained the driving force. At the same time, one cannot gloss over the socio-economic content of modern Indian political thought. The nationalists while confronting colonialism also waged a war against the decadent social system which, in the name of holding its genuine spirit, actually defended archaic values for sustaining vested socio-economic forces. This is a unique feature of the Indian political thought that hardly figures in the available academic literature. Notwithstanding their clear political goal, the nationalists fulfilled a historic mission by articulating a new discourse while commenting on the prevalent socio-economic circumstances under colonialism. Central to their concern was to understand the Indian society that evolved in a rather distorted way presumably because of colonialism. By providing a contextual interpretation of Indian political thought, the book seeks to capture the nationalist concern that appeared to have governed the articulation of ideas and views of the prominent freedom fighters while challenging British colonialism.

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II

The book is organised around major themes in modern Indian social and political thought, keeping in view the changing milieu of colonialism. Since the dividing line between social and political is very thin in the context of nationalist thought, one must not stretch the distinction literally. In other words, nationalist thought contains elements of both social and political in its articulation. It would, therefore, be wrong to categorise ideas of thinkers as purely social or political, since they are enmeshed in a very complex manner to take a concrete shape. So, those identified as social reformers in the context of the nationalist movement had a clear political goal because social regeneration was at the root of any successful political mobilisation against a colonial power. By challenging the religious orthodoxy, Ram Mohan Roy tried, for instance, to scuttle the divisive tendencies in Hindu society. In order to build a socially cohesive and emotionally vibrant collectivity, Roy seemed to have underplayed his concern for political freedom. His appreciation for the British was governed by his critical admiration for the philosophy of Enlightenment that accompanied the colonial rule in India. So, Roy's critical response to the Company rule was an offshoot of an era that was still uncertain over the nature of an alien administration at the behest of the East India Company. What ran through Roy's socio-political ideas appeared in Bankim and Dayananda Saraswati and others confronting the growing importance of colonialism. It is debatable whether they were primarily social reformers as some analysts tend to characterise them, presumably because they were not entirely delinked from the contemporary political questions relating to the devastating nature of colonialism. Furthermore, that they expressed concern over the relative weaknesses of 'the nation' vis-à-vis the British due to religiously-justified and socially-endorsed superstitions, introduces a clear political tone to their ideas and thoughts. The priority for them seemed to develop 'a strong' nation to confront a foreign power that colonised India by virtue of their socio-political strength. What guided them was based on their assessment of a reality that was still unfolding.

The story is more or less the same among certain sections of Muslim thinkers who equally appreciated the 'modernising' zeal of the British Empire. Syed Ahmad Khan considered, for instance,

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the colonial rule as a significant influence on the orthodox Muslim society. Given his reformist stance, it is clear as to why he opposed the 1857 Revolt because of its drive to bring back the feudal authority of the past rulers. His admiration for the British rule was based on unstinted belief in the importance of the foreign rule in laying the foundation of new society based on modern scientific knowledge. Like Ram Mohan Roy, he favoured contact with the West as a significant step to 'modernise' the Indian society. In this regard, the formation of Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, which later became Aligarh Muslim University, served a useful role. As the discussion in the text shows, the socio-political processes of colonialism had a decisive bearing on the articulation of social and political thought in modern India. Whether Hindus or Muslims, the trend remained almost similar in the sense that the response was always guarded while commenting on colonialism and its increasing role in changing India's social and political fabric.

The British India underwent radical transformations in the twentieth century. In a nutshell, there are three major characteristics of the period that appear to have influenced, if not determined, the way in which social and political thought is both articulated and conducted. First, nationalism underwent radical changes as a result of the link between peripheral struggles with the centrally organised Congress-led freedom movement, as evident in the Non-Cooperation–Khilafat Movement. Second, in organising movements, activists with political affiliations of whatever kind faced serious challenges, based sometime on ideological differences, sometimes on communal divisions; the latter, in fact, became decisive in causing a permanent fissure in the nationalist political platform. Both Hindu and Muslim leadership drew on religion to gain politically under circumstances when individual identity was uncritically conceptualised and strongly defended in terms of religious affiliations disregarding other probable influences in its construction. Third, in the development of the nationalist ideology, several competing ideologies, not always properly articulated, had significant roles representing the views of those in the periphery. For instance, the Congress, especially in the aftermath of the Non-Cooperation Movement, formally recognised the importance of the peasantry and workers in anti-imperial movements. Although the agenda of the periphery was accommodated in the all-pervasive nationalist ideology, it was never decisive in the articulation of

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nationalist response that was largely, if not entirely, codified around the anti-British sentiments. In other words, the nationalist ideology prevailed over other alternatives, which if allowed to flourish, would have probably fashioned the struggle for freedom differently. Despite various possibilities, Indian freedom struggle continued to remain largely 'nationalist' in which the goal other than resistance to a colonial power was not sincerely espoused, presumably because it would dilute the campaign for independence. In India's freedom struggle, nationalism as an ideology never sought to create a nation–state but was primarily an ideology inspiring a subject nation to fight for independence. The nationalist movement was thus structured around 'freedom from British rule'. Foreign rule was unacceptable not for any conventional nationalist reasons but because it choked and distorted India's growth as a civilisation.

As evident, Gandhi emerged on the political scene in dramatically altered socio-economic and political milieu. Hence, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to characterise Gandhi in a straightforward manner. In fact, Gandhi is an enigma. Although he had written extensively on various themes pertaining to India's socio-economic and political life, it is difficult to search for a well-argued thesis in Gandhi, presumably because there are areas in his thought that often project a different Gandhi altogether. In order to deconstruct Gandhian thought in the perspective in which he was involved in a gigantic nationalist struggle of the twentieth century, what is probably incumbent is to assess Gandhi in two different ways: first, relating Gandhian political ideas to the actual anti-British onslaught that began with the 1920–22 Non-Cooperation Movement and culminated in the 1942 Quit India campaign in which Gandhi reigned supreme. Second, there were events, more significant perhaps from the point of view of anti-imperial struggle which, though drew upon Gandhian preaching, deviated from the well-established norm of 'non-violence'; the implication of such a deviation appears disastrous to Gandhi himself, but for those who participated in political movements which ran counter to non-violence, the means of political action seem to have been derived from Gandhi. This perhaps suggests for 'autonomy of political movements' even in the context of an overarching influence of a major political ideology, like non-violence, in a struggle against an imperial power. In other words, what is sought to be argued here is that context needs to be analysed to explain the transformation of

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an ideology that had, more or less, prevailed over other competing ideologies during the Gandhi-led freedom struggle. One should also be careful to underline that despite marginalisation of non-violence as a guiding force on occasions, the anti-imperial counter-offensives with whatever ideological underpinning, were not at all spontaneous; instead, they were preceded by the consistent Congress effort at mobilising masses both at the national and local levels through either social work or direct political campaign. Given the complexity of the socio-political environment in British India in which Gandhi articulated his voice of opposition, it is difficult to ignore the importance of the context which unmistakably had a bearing on his views. Gandhi's social and political thought is thus an articulation of such a complex process that cannot be delinked from the reality in which he undertook perhaps the most gigantic anti-imperial struggle in the twentieth century. As discussed in the text, the ideas which the Mahatma propagated were not absolutely indigenised but were a creative articulation in which the prevalent socio-economic and political processes played significant roles.

There were competing strands in India's social and political thought, though Gandhian approach to the freedom struggle remained most crucial. While E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyer) articulated, for instance, the voice of the peripheral socio-economic groups, B.R. Ambedkar pursued the argument further within an ideological framework challenging Gandhi and his theory of accommodating conflicting social and economic interests. The agnostic Jawaharlal Nehru did not subscribe entirely to what the Mahatma stood for and yet he carried on, as his most trusted lieutenant, in the freedom struggle. What was unique in Nehru's conceptualisation of Gandhi and his thoughts was probably most creative in the sense that he constantly redefined his ideological commitments keeping in mind the importance of the Mahatma in India's struggle against imperialism. M.N. Roy and E.M.S. Namboodripad put forward arguments in favour of socialist revolution. Being disillusioned, Roy, however, became a radical humanist suggesting that revolution was possible not through class struggle but through proper education. By defending peasant revolution as most appropriate for India, Namboodripad reiterated the Maoist interpretation of Marxism. Unlike these thinkers who argued for a specific plan of action, Rabindranath Tagore commented on the growing divisions within the Indian society

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undermining basic human values. For Tagore, interaction with the West paved the way for a critical assessment of the so-called eastern values, though he rejected the European notion of nationalism as simply inadequate for a diverse society like India. Seeking to combine Gandhian ideas with socialist thought, Lohia, through his conceptualisation of *sapta kranti* (seven revolutions), articulated an indigenous response to social and political thought with significant roots in India's diverse socio-cultural milieu. In a significant way, Jayaprakash Narayan's *sampurna kranti* (total revolution) is drawn on Lohia's political thought. Theorising total revolution as a permanent revolution, JP also suggested a meaningful participation of people in the decision-making process.

To conclude, Indian social and political thought is perhaps the most creative and complex response to the issues with roots in colonialism as it unfolded during the British rule. It was a critical engagement on the part of those who confronted an alien system of governance and its foundational ideas that always sought to cripple what were known as indigenous values. For an appropriate conceptualisation of such intricate processes, what is required is to accord adequate importance to the dialectical interaction between both the imposed and the prevalent social and political ideas in the context of hegemonic influence of colonialism. The articulation of these processes were, however, not uniform throughout India. As shown, extremist ideas struck roots in Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra, and its influence elsewhere in the country was almost absent. Illustrative of the importance of a specific socio-economic reality in supporting a particular political ideology, this example draws our attention to the dialectics of the growth of ideas in a transitional society. Similarly, based on their reading of Indian society, those identified as 'social reformers' undertook reform agenda seriously than anything else. Gandhi was a class by himself. Not only did he talk about social reforms, he had also a clear political agenda at a time when Indian national struggle was capable of negotiating with the foreign power in its own terms. It is, therefore, difficult to provide a straight-jacket description to Indian social and political thought due perhaps to its complex unfolding during the struggle against imperialism. Notwithstanding this difficulty, the task is further complicated for reasons connected with the rise and consolidation of both complementary and contradictory strands in Indian social and political thought. Given the diverse

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socio-cultural circumstances in which the subcontinent was placed, one can provide a plausible explanation by linking the social and political thought to their immediate location. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Congress party became an umbrella organisation capable of accommodating individuals with conflicting, if not contradictory, ideas.

III

Nationalism was not a homogeneous ideology, as its evolution during India's freedom struggle clearly demonstrated. Before the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, freedom struggle had a very narrow social base and geographic expanse. Even the Congress, confined merely to metropolitan cities, had no endeavour in involving people beyond these cities. The nationalist activities were at their low ebb. Only during the annual session of the Congress, discussions were initiated and resolutions were adopted seeking concession from the British government. The Moderate nationalists within the Congress articulated their opposition to the British rule through petition, prayer and protest, which gradually caused dissension among its colleagues which resulted in a split within the Congress in the 1907 Surat Congress between Moderates and Extremists. Both the Moderates and Extremists failed to expand the constituencies of the nationalist politics, presumably because of their exclusive socio-economic background that acted as a deterrent to those at the lower rung of the society. Neither of these sections was also keen in this regard. In fact, Muslims became alienated largely because the Extremists held strong views against them which they pursued most vigorously during the 1905–08 anti-Bengal partition movement. Disheartened by this policy, Rabindranath Tagore who, for instance, supported the movement at the outset, withdrew his support as it led to division between the communities. So, nationalism was articulated differently by different sections involved in the anti-British struggle.

The Hindu–Muslim division, undoubtedly the result of the strategic failure of the Congress, was consolidated further due to socio-economic imbalances between them. Besides these broad divisions, communities were further subdivided pursuing conflicting ideologies. In terms of organisational affiliation, while the

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nationalists from both the communities had their place in the All India National Congress, the Muslim separatist stream flowed through the Muslim League and their Hindu counterparts through the Hindu Mahasabha. By 1916, with the signing of the Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League, it was fairly clear that without the approval of the Muslim League, no scheme aiming at Hindu–Muslim unity would succeed. Even with its strong religious overtone (because to the Muslims, it was more a *jihad* than a political struggle), the Non-Cooperation–Khilafat Movement was the last instance of an understanding between the principal communities on the national plane. Unlike the League, the Hindu Mahasabha was never able to build a strong base; it had a chance to consolidate Hindu opinion when the Congress High Command indirectly accepted the 1932 Communal Award that guaranteed separate electorate to the Muslims. Given the polarisation of political forces on communal grounds at the level of organised politics and deep-rooted socio-economic differences between the two communities, it is not hard to discern why Hindu–Muslim rivalries finally led to partition of the country in 1947 to fulfil the Muslim nationalist aspiration.

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Model Questions

CHAPTER 1: EARLY NATIONALIST RESPONSES: RAM MOHAN ROY, BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTOPADHYAY, DAYANANDA SARASWATI AND JOTIBA PHULE

1.1 Elaborate the broad contours of the early nationalist response in India.

1.2 Critically examine the salient features of the socio-political thought of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

1.3 Assess the contribution of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay as a nationalist thinker.

1.4 Describe the main currents of the socio-political ideas of Dayananda Saraswati.

1.5 Illustrate how the socio-political ideas of Jotiba Phule were unique amongst the early thinkers of India.

1.6 'The early nationalist response in India appeared to be more social than political in its orientations.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

1.7 'It would not be wrong to say that the socio-religious reformers laid the foundations on which the later nationalist response was built up in India.' Comment.

1.8 'A proper understanding of the early nationalist response in India would not be possible without looking at the socio-political contexts of the thinkers.' In the light of the above statement, explain how the early nationalist response could not be understood without keeping the contexts of the thinkers in mind?

1.9 Why is Raja Ram Mohan Roy called the father of modern India? Evaluate his role as the pioneer of social reforms in India.

1.10 Do you agree with the view that Jyotirao Phule may be regarded as the precursor of the Dalit awakening in India? Give reasons for your answer.

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CHAPTER 2: MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS: DADABHAI NAOROJI, M.G. RANADE AND B.G. TILAK

2.1 Define Moderates and Extremists. What are the basic postulates of their respective ideologies?
2.2 Bring out the differences between the Moderates and Extremists in the Indian national movement.
2.3 Examine the factors that led to the disillusionment of the Extremists with the Moderates.
2.4 Make a comparative study of the strategies, policies and programmes of the Moderates and the Extremists.
2.5 Evaluate the role of Dadabhai Naoroji as the icon of the Moderate elements of the Indian National Congress.
2.6 How far did the rise of Extremist elements lead to the radicalisation of the Congress vis-à-vis its attitude towards British rule in India?
2.7 Assess the basic elements of the Extremist ideology with special reference to the views of Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
2.8 Examine the circumstances that led to the parting of ways between the Moderates and Extremists at Surat in 1907.
2.9 Do you support the view that the Moderates and the Extremists supplemented each other rather than acting as rivals in the cause of freedom struggle of the country? Give reasons for your answer.
2.10 Evaluate the relative contributions of the Moderates and Extremists in the Indian national movement.

CHAPTER 3: MAHATMA GANDHI

3.1 In what ways did Gandhi radicalise the theoretical as well as practical orientations of the freedom struggle of the country?
3.2 Write a critical essay on the basic precepts of the Gandhian political thought.
3.3 Examine the value of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and *satyagraha* as the key features of the Gandhian thought and action.

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3.4 How did Gandhi conceptualise *swaraj*? Explain in detail.
3.5 Examine the relevance of Gandhian thought in contemporary times.

CHAPTER 4: RABINDRANATH TAGORE

4.1 Do you agree with the view that the life of Tagore was a life in 'creative unity'? Give reasons for your answer.
4.2 Describe the main strands of the political thought of Tagore.
4.3 What are the main characteristics of the 'true freedom' as conceptualised by Tagore? How far such 'true freedom' is manifested in contemporary India?
4.4 Examine the basic issues of the debate between Tagore and Gandhi. Whose point of view seems more plausible to you?
4.5 Elaborate Tagore's views on nationalism.

CHAPTER 5: B.R. AMBEDKAR

5.1 Evaluate the contributions of Ambedkar as the champion of the cause of untouchables in the Indian society.
5.2 Critically examine the views of Ambedkar on the issues of caste and untouchability in India.
5.3 Write a critical essay on Ambedkar's 'Annihilation of Caste.'
5.4 What were main points of debate between Ambedkar and Gandhi? Whose point of view do you support? Give reasons for your answer.
5.5 Discuss the main strands of the political thought of Ambedkar.

CHAPTER 6: JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

6.1 What were the factors that led to so much of ideological turbulence in the life and thought of Jayaprakash Narayan?

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6.2 Write a critical essay on Jayaprakash Narayan's plan for a reconstruction of the Indian polity.
6.3 Define *sarvodaya*. Why did Jayaprakash Narayan find *sarvodaya* to be the best philosophy for remodelling the India society?
6.4 Critically examine the concept of 'total revolution'? How far do you find the concept as having the potential to bring about a holistic reform in India?
6.5 Assess the role and contribution of Jayaprakash Narayan as a rebel extraordinary amongst the Indian political thinkers.

CHAPTER 7: JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

7.1 Evaluate the role and contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru as a pragmatic thinker in India.
7.2 Write a critical essay on the Nehruvian inputs in structuring the system of governance in the country.
7.3 How far can Nehru be called as the father of planning in India? Answer in detail.
7.4 What were the dilemmas of Nehru as a democrat? How far was he able to reconcile these dilemmas?
7.5 Assess the ideas of Nehru as a true internationalist.

CHAPTER 8: MUHAMMAD IQBAL

8.1 How far is it true to call the life of Iqbal as a life in complete turnaround? Give reasons for your answer.
8.2 Delineate the broad contours of the political ideas of Iqbal.
8.3 What are the unique features of Iqbal's views on nationalism?
8.4 How did Iqbal conceptualise pan-Islamism as a solution for the problems facing the Muslims in India?
8.5 Critically examine the views of Iqbal on Pakistan.

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CHAPTER 9: M.N. ROY

9.1 What were the factors that led to the transition of M.N. Roy from Marxism to Radical Humanism?
9.2 How far would it be correct to describe M.N. Roy as the most versatile political thinker in India?
9.3 What are the main issues in Roy's critique of the Gandhian thought and action?
9.4 Highlight the main features of Radical Humanism as propounded by M.N. Roy.
9.5 'M.N. Roy eloquently represented the band of Indian thinkers whose initial fascination with Marxism could not last long.' Comment.

CHAPTER 10: RAM MANOHAR LOHIA

10.1 Trace the indigenous strands in the social and political thought of Ram Manohar Lohia.
10.2 Critically examine the main features of the political thought of Lohia.
10.3 What is the basis of Lohia's critique of Western ideologies? Elucidate his notion of 'New Socialism'.
10.4 What are the basic features of the political model suggested by Lohia for independent India.
10.5 Describe the crucial elements of the social thought of Lohia.
10.6 How far do you think that Lohia was a true internationalist? Give reasons for your answer.

CHAPTER 11: SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

11.1 How did the early life of Subhash Chandra Bose mould his political thoughts in later years?
11.2 Bring out the salient features of the political ideology of Bose.
11.3 How do you rate Subhas Chandra Bose: a theoretician or a practitioner? Give reasons for your answer.

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11.4 What are the views of Subhas Chandra Bose regarding Hindu orthodoxy in India?
11.5 Evaluate the role of Bose in the nationalist movement in India.

CHAPTER 12: V.D. SAVARKAR

12.1 How far it would be correct to say that the life of Savarkar was a life for the Hindu cause?
12.2 How did Savarkar provide a nationalist interpretation of the Indian history? How far do you agree with his interpretation?
12.3 Elucidate the basic features of the social thought of Savarkar.
12.4 Critically examine Savarkar's views on Hindutva.
12.5 'Savarkar's conception of Indian nationalism was rooted in Hindutva.' Comment.

CHAPTER 13: PANDITA RAMABAI

13.1 'Pandita Ramabai's life can truly be described as a life in pilgrimage for the cause of women.' Comment.
13.2 Discuss the main aspects of the feminist thought propounded by Pandita Ramabai.
13.3 What are the institutional pursuits made by Pandita Ramabai for the emancipation of women in India.
13.4 How far would it be correct to say that Pandita Ramabai pioneered the women's movement in India? Give reasons for your answer.
13.5 Critically examine the contributions made by Pandita Ramabai in ameliorating the conditions of women in India.

CHAPTER 14: NATURE AND PROCESSES OF INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

14.1 Critically examine the nature and processes of the Indian freedom struggle during the Gandhian era.

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14.2 Discuss the nature of the participation of various sections of people in India during the Non-Cooperation Movement.

14.3 How far would it be correct to say that the Non-Cooperation Movement provided a mass character to the national Movement in India?

14.4 What were the factors that led to the initiation of the Civil Disobedience Movement? To what extent was the Movement able to achieve its declared objectives?

14.5 Describe the nature and extent of mass participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. How did salt become the rallying point for the people during the Movement?

14.6 What were the basic characteristics of the Quit India Movement? What was its impact on the British attitude towards the freedom movement in the country?

14.7 Do you agree with the view that the Quit India Movement exposed the limits of the Gandhian method of struggle in the Indian freedom struggle? Give reasons for your answer.

14.8 Examine the role of the Indian National Army in the freedom struggle of the country.

14.9 Demonstrate the ways in which the Indian Naval Uprising could be considered a landmark event in the national movement of India.

14.10 Critically evaluate the role of Mahatma Gandhi in the national movement of the country.

CHAPTER 15: LANDMARKS IN CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT DURING BRITISH RULE IN INDIA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

15.1 Discuss the major landmarks in the constitutional development of India during the British rule.

15.2 Examine the major features of the Morley–Minto reforms. How far is it correct to say that it laid the foundations of the communal politics in India?

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15.3 What is Dyarchy? What were the main features of the system of dyarchy introduced by the Montague–Chelmsford reforms in India?

15.4 Critically examine the main provisions of the Government of India Act 1919, with special reference to its focus on the autonomy of the provincial government in India.

15.5 What was the mandate of the Simon Commission? How did the recommendations of the Simon Commission impact the nature of the future India polity?

15.6 Write a critical essay on the main provisions of the Government of India Act 1935.

15.7 'The provisions of the Government of India Act 1935 provided a solid foundation for the formulation of the Constitution of the free India.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

15.8 'The most significant contribution of the Government of India Act 1935 appears to be its formulations on the federal nature of the Indian polity.' Elaborate.

15.9 'The series of reform measures introduced by British in India reflected a subtle agenda pursued by the British in India.' Examine the statement with special reference to the deformities the British moves introduced in the future Indian polity.

15.10 Examine the significance of the Cripps proposals. How far were the Cripps proposals able to break the constitutional deadlock in India?

CHAPTER 16: SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

16.1 Write a critical essay on the socio-economic dimensions of the nationalist movement in India.

16.2 Critically examine the nature of the communal question in India. How did it lead to the partition of the country?

16.3 Examine the nature, pattern and spread of the backward castes movement in the country.

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16.4 What were the major characteristics of the Dalit movement in the pre-independence times?
16.5 'The tribal movement gave a new orientation and stridency to the nationalist movement in India.' Elaborate.
16.6 How far did the women's movement in the pre-independence times appear to be a revolutionary idea in India? Illustrate your answer.
16.7 'The civil rights movement reflected the deepening of the liberal values of life in the India society.' Comment.
16.8 'The trade union movement played a significant role in radicalising the nature of nationalist movement in India to a great extent.' Explain and illustrate.
16.9 Examine the major features of the peasant movement in India. What were the limitations of the movement?
16.10 How far would it be correct to say that the understanding of the nationalist movement in India would have been incomplete without having a proper understanding of its socio-economic dimensions? Give reasons for your answer.

CHAPTER 17: CULMINATION OF THE BRITISH RULE AND THE MAKING OF INDIA'S CONSTITUTION

17.1 What was the 3 June Plan? What was its significance in the culmination of the British rule in India?
17.2 Critically examine the main provisions of the India Independence Act 1947.
17.3 Write a critical essay on the composition and nature of representation in the Constituent Assembly of India.
17.4 Highlight the major characteristics of the making of the Constitution of India.
17.5 Discuss the salient features of the Indian Constitution.

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Glossary

Advaita	An Indian philosophical school espousing the cause of non-duality of the existence of god.
Ahimsa	Non-violence.
Amatya	Minister.
Anandamath	The historical novel authored by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.
Anushilan	A kind of practice that Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay elaborated in his writings.
Ari	Enemy.
Arthashastra	The ancient classic written by Kautilya.
Atmashakti	Self-reliance.
Avarnas	A class of people lying outside the framework of the *varna* system of Hindu society.
Avatara	Incarnation.
Azad Hind Fauj	The Indian National Army set up by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.
Baghanakha	A typical indigenous weapon used by Shivaji in his fight against the Mughals.
Bahishkrit Bharat	Literally meaning proscribed India, an euphemism used by Ambedkar to identify the untouchables in Indian society.
Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha	A social reform organisation set up by Ambedkar.

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Bande Mataram	The national song of India penned by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay.
Bhakti	Devotion.
Bharat bhumi	The land of India.
Bharatvarsha	India.
Bhoodan	Donation of land.
Brahman	The highest caste in the caste hierarchy.
Chaprasi	Peon.
Charkha-Khaddar	Spining wheel and home spun cotton textile.
Chaturvarna	The system of fourfold functional division of the Hindu society.
Chaukhambha	Literally meaning four-pillars, a concept developed by Ram Manohar Lohia to recast the Indian political system.
Chowkidari Tax	A kind of security tax imposed by the government on the people.
Danda	Punishment.
Dandaniti	Penal Provisions.
Dandi Yatra	The march Mahatma Gandhi undertook in 1930 to launch the salt *satyagraha*.
Dharma	Code of moral duties of the people.
Durga	An image of Goddess representing power.
Dvairajya	A system of joint rule by the males of the same family over the whole kingdom.
Dwija	The people of higher caste who are ordained to be twice-born through certain rituals performed in the childhood.
Fatwa-i-Jahandari	A political treatise authored by Barani.

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Gitanjali	The anthology of poems written by Rabindranath Tagore.
Gramdaan	Donation of village.
Gram Panchayat	Executive body of the village assembly.
Gram Sabha	Village assembly.
Gurudev	An euphemism used by Gandhi for Rabindranath Tagore.
Harijan	An euphemism Gandhi used for the scheduled castes people and in the name of which he also started publishing a journal.
Hartals	Strike.
Hath yogis	Seers having intense stubbornness in their postures.
Hind Swaraj	The monograph published by Gandhi in 1909.
Hindu rashtra	The Hindu-nation.
Hindustani Samyavadi Sangh	Literally meaning Indian Communist Association, it was an organisation espousing the cause of struggle against the colonial power by violent means.
Jana Gana Mana	National anthem of India written by Rabindranath Tagore.
Janapada	A unique conjunction of people and territory.
Jati	Race.
Jat-Pat Todak Mandal	A liberal social reform organisation aimed at breaking the shackles of the caste system.
Jatras	A typical form of folk art performed mainly in Bengal.
Bharti	The journal started by the family of Rabindranath Tagore.
Jeevandaan	Donation of Life.
Karenga ya Marenga	'We will do or die'.
Karma	Moral duty.

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Kayastha	A relatively middle caste in Indian social order adept at doing clerical duties.
Kesari	The journal published by Tilak.
Khilafat	The movement launched in India in 1921.
Quran	The foundational text of Islam.
Kosha	Treasury.
Kshatriyas	The warrior class in the caste hierarchy in India.
Lokniti	Politics of People.
Lokshakti	Power of People.
Madhyama	A king placed in the middle order.
Mahar	An untouchable caste to which Ambedkar belonged.
Mahratta	The journal published by Tilak.
Mandala	Circular theory of interstate relations given by Kautilya.
Mandukya Upanishada	A particular religious scripture of Hindus.
Marathi	The vernacular spoken by people in the state of Maharashtra.
Matsyanyaya	Anarchy; seeking to establish the hegemony of the stronger over the weaker.
Maya	Deception or Illusion.
Melas	Fairs.
Millat	Race.
Mitra	Ally.
Mooknayak	Literally meaning silent leader, a journal started by Ambedkar.
Mughals	The rulers of India in the medieval times.
Nasihats	Advices.
Naujawan Bharat Sabha	A youth organisation in Punjab literally meaning Indian Youth Congress.

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Nirguna Brahman	The shapeless soul.
Panchas	Members of the Village Panchayat.
Panchayati raj	Indigenous system of rural local self government in India.
Panchayati Samiti	Block level panchayat.
Panchsheel	Five principles which acted as the nucleus of the Indian foreign policy of non-alignment.
Peshvas	The family of prime ministers of the Marathas who later on became the rulers themselves.
Pitribhu	Fatherland.
Prajadroha	A concept argued by Tilak to refer to the right of the people to resist an authority that loses legitimacy.
Punyabhu	Holy land.
Purna Swaraj	Complete independence.
Purusha Shukta	A particular stanza of ancient Hindu law books.
Raj	An euphemism used for British rule in India.
Rajya shakti	Power of State.
Ranniti	Rules of guiding a battle.
Rashtra	Territory, nation.
Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh	The right-wing nationalist organisation espousing the cause of Hindu-rashtra.
Sabha	Meeting/Association.
Sakara	Bodily incarnation.
Samaj Samata Sangh	A social reform organisation set up by Ambedkar.
Samata Sainik Dal	A social reform organisation set up by Ambedkar.
Sampattidaan	Donation of Property.
Sampurna Kranti	Total revolution.
Samskriti	Culture.
Samyavad	Communism.

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Sanatan	Traditionally remaining in existence from ancient times.
Sangathan	Organisation.
Sanskritisation	A process through which the lower castes people seek to imbibe the cultural characteristics of the upper castes people.
Sannyasi	Ascetic.
Sapta kranti	Literally meaning 'seven-revolution', a notion articulated by Ram Manohar Lohia for reinvigorating the moribund Indian society.
Saptasindhu	The Indus river system consisting of seven rivers.
Sarvodaya	Uplift of all the sections of society.
Sati	A cruel system of burning alive a widow along with her dead husband.
Satyagraha	Stubborn seeking of truth.
Satyagrahi	The practitioner of *satyagraha*.
Satyarth Prakash	The classic authored by Swami Dayananda Saraswati.
Satyashodhak Samaj	A social reform organisation set up by Jotiba Phule.
Shadgunas	Six war tactics.
Shahid	Martyr.
Shariat	The body of Muslim laws.
Shastras	Holy scriptures of Hindu religion.
Shruti	A particular set of Hindu religious scriptures.
Shudras	The untouchables castes of the Indian society.
Shudratishudras	The extreme untouchables amongst the untouchables.
Smriti	A particular set of Hindu religious scriptures.
Sva	Self.

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Swabhava	Instinct behaviour.
Swadeshi	Indigenously produced or manufactured.
Swadharma	Duty ordained by self.
Swami	King.
Swaraj	Self-rule
Swatantraveer	An alias used for V.D. Savarkar literally meaning the fighter for independence.
Tapasya	Self-suffering.
Tarikh-i-Ferozeshahi	A text authored by Barani.
Tritiya Ratna	Literally meaning Third Eye, a play published by Jotiba Phule in 1855.
Udasin	An indifferent king.
Upayas	The tricks of peace politics given by Kautilya.
Vairajya	A system of rule by a foreign ruler by occupation.
Varna	Functionally distinct class of people.
Varna system	Conceptually, the ancient system of functional division of Indian society into four distinct classes which later on perverted into the caste system.
Vedas	The foundational texts of the Hindu religion.
Vijigishu	The conqueror or the ambitious king.
Virat Purusha	A particular stanza of ancient Hindu law books.
Visvabharti	The university set up by Rabindranath Tagore.
Zawabit	Man-made laws.
Zila Panchayat	District Panchayat.

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