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# UNIT-1 PRE-MODERN SOCIO-RELIGIOUS POLITICAL THOUGHT IN INDIA: THE DIVERSE STRANDS

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## Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 State and Sovereignty in Ancient India
- 1.3 State and Sovereignty in Medieval India
- 1.4 Religion and Polity
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 Exercises

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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To understand modern Indian political thought, it is essential to have a broad view of the historical processes through which the modern polity has emerged. We have civilisation which is comparable with the Greek civilisation and as Plato and Aristotle are considered as the pioneers of western political tradition, so are our ancient and medieval texts on statecraft. Whether it is the concept of monarchy, republicanism, council of ministers, welfare state, diplomacy, espionage system or any other political concept/institution which is known in modern political parlance, all these have references in our early political traditions. State, society and governance are interlinked to each other. If we look at our past we will find that there was a time when people used to live in small groups based on kinship ties and there was no need felt for an authority to control people's life. But with the growth of population and clashes between groups of people, the need was felt for an authority who would provide the required protection to his people and whose order would be obeyed by all. With the coming of groups of people together, society came into existence which was followed by the emergence of state and the art of governance. So in a way we can say that individual needs led to the emergence of society and it is the collective need of the society which in turn led to the formulation of various structures and theories related to state and governance. Thus, the social-historical context becomes a determinant factor in the evolution of state as well as the ideas related to statecraft. Keeping this in mind when we look at our past we find that starting from the Vedic society till the establishment of the British rule India passed through various phases and also had undergone various political experiments. All these traditions and experiences in one way or other have contributed in making what we call modern Indian political thought. It is not possible to deal in detail all these developments in one Unit. Therefore, our focus in this Unit will be to familiarise you with the major trends in pre-modern Indian political thought. With the help of historical texts like Manusmriti, Arthashastra, Fatwa-i-Jahandari, Ain-i-Akbari which are considered as important treatises on statecraft, we will try to explain the evolution of the Indian political thought. In the first section, we will introduce you to the tradition based on Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain literature, then the Islamic political tradition and finally, the relationship between religion and state in India.

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## 1.2 STATE AND SOVEREIGNTY IN ANCIENT INDIA

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In her seminal work on social formations in the mid-first millennium B.C. Romila Thapar has explained transition from lineage society to state (R. Thapar, *History* and *Beyond*, collection of essays). In lineage society the basic unit was the extended family under control of the eldest male member. The size of the family was dependent on economy and environment and it was the genealogical relationships which tied the families together. It was through kinship and rituals, that the chief exercised his authority over the clans. Differentiation came in within society between the ruler and the ruled because of kin connections and wealth. However, shift from pastoral to peasant economy, population growth, social and cultural heterogeneity along with other factors led to the emergence of state systems. In the opinion of Romila Thapar conquest, extensive trade, the decline of political elite and democratic processes led to the change towards state system. The Vedic period represented the lineage system but later on growing stratification in society indicated the tendency towards state formation. With the formation of state the issue of governance of the state became a major concern of the society. In the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata we find the reference to *Matsyanyaya*, a condition in which small fishes become prey to big fishes. This analogy was given to explain the anarchic condition in a society where no authority exists. To avoid this type of crisis, people collectively agreed to have a set of laws and to appeal to the god for a king who will maintain law and order in society. It is also argued that without appealing to any divine agency people on their own selected a person on whom the authority was vested to protect human society. We find references to both Divine Origin of Kingship as well as Social Contract Theory of Kingship. Though theological and metaphysical environment had a strong influence in shaping the ancient Indian thinking, various studies on ancient Indian polity suggest the emergence of polity as an independent domain. Whether it was a Divine Origin of Kingship or Social Contract, we find monarchy as the dominant form of government in the early Indian polity. The seven constituents of the state as prescribed in the Shanti Parva of the Mahabharata are as follows:

Swamin or the sovereign,

Amatya or the officials,

Janapada or the territory,

Durga or the fort,

Kosa or the treasury,

Danda or the Army,

Mitra or the Allies.

All these are considered as the natural constituents of a state. State is visualised as an organic body having seven organs. Swamin or the king is considered as the head of this structure. Next to him is the Amatya or the council of ministers through which the king governs the state. Janapada means territory having agricultural land, mines, forests, etc. Durga or fort suggests the fortification of the capital. Kosa or treasury, the place where collected revenues are kept. Danda refers to the power of law and of authority. Mitra is the friendly state. Looking at this structure of state one finds lot of resemblance with the

attributes of the modern state. *Manusmriti* strongly advocated for a political authority. **Manu** was of the opinion that in the absence of a political authority, there would be disorder in society. It is the duty of the king to ensure justice in the society and protect the weak. 'By taking his due, by preventing the confusion of the castes (varna), and by protecting the weak, the power of the king grows, and he prospers in this (world) and after death'. (from *Manusmriti* cited in A.Appadorai, *Indian Political Thinking*). **Manu** was in favour of social hierarchy and caste system and his notion of justice was based on diverse customs and practices of different castes. He suggested that though the king derived his authority from god, in practice he should be guided by the brahmanas. The rationale behind it was the assumption that brahmanas possess knowledge and knowledge should rule. **Manu** prescribed the structure of state in terms of villages, districts and provinces which resembles our present day structure of administration. If one looks at the rationale behind this organisational structure, one may easily find that the principle of decentralisation of authority was the guiding principle behind this organisation. He also advocated an assembly of the learned as well as the officers of the state to advise the king and this shows his concern for the public opinion. Members were expected to be objective and fearless in taking decisions on the basis of dharma. Village and district authorities were suggested to function independently and only when there was any need, the king was expected to help. Welfare of the general people was one of the major concerns of the king. 'If the inhabitants of the cities and the provinces be poor, the king should, whether they depend upon him immediately or mediately, show them compassion to the best of his power.... Wiping the tears of the distressed, the helpless and the old, and inspiring them with joy, constitute the duty of the king'. (*Mahabharata-Shanti Parva*, cited in A. Appadorai, *Indian Political Thinking*). Commenting on the political ideas explained in the *Manusmriti*, V.R.Mehta in his *Indian Political Thought*, has remarked that 'It is indeed astounding to know that very early in the development of Indian political thought, the ideas of decentralisation, welfare state and public opinion are so clearly spelled out'.

In terms of early Indian political thought, *Arthashastra* by Kautilya gives a more detailed picture of statecraft. Scholars are of the opinion that *Arthashastra* is not the work of one Kautilya and the date of Kautilya is also a matter of debate among historians. It is also argued that there are interpolations in the *Arthashastra*. Whatever be the truth the fact remains that *Arthashastra*, as a text, deals with various functions as well as the methods of running the state. Moving ahead of **Manu**, Kautilya advocated a strong monarchy but he was not favourable to the idea of absolute monarchy. While in the earlier tradition, the king was guided by brahmanical authority, in *Arthashastra* the king is considered to have the last word in all matters. On the chapters dealing with the king and his family, *Arthashastra* tells us as to how a king should control his senses and discharge his duties, how a king should protect himself from any threat on his life and the importance of selection of right counsellors and priests. There is an elaborate discussion on the civil law explaining various measures required for an effective administration and on criminal law to take care of those people who are considered as a threat to the country. Kautilya cautioned the king to be vigilant about the motives and integrity of his ministers and also talked about general selfish nature of people, bribery and corruption inherent in administration. He suggested that through reward and punishment, the king should set a standard for others to follow. In his opinion, the king is above others but not above 'dharma'. Here dharma means obeying customary and sacred law and protection of his subjects' life and property. This was considered as the basic duty of a king. Suggestions have also been given to deal with friendly and hostile neighbours,

organisation of armies, for spies to keep a watch on internal and external developments. We are told that army should be placed under a divided command since this is a sure guarantee against treachery. The notion of welfare state is further strengthened in Arthashastra. The king is expected to protect agriculturists from oppression and to take care of the orphans, the aged and the helpless. Happiness of his people should always be the concern of a wise king, otherwise he may lose people's support; a good king should take up welfare activities in the interest of all. According to Kautilya 'in the happiness of his subjects lies the happiness of a king, in their welfare, his welfare. The king shall consider as good, not what pleases himself but what pleases his subjects' (Arthashastra). Another important concept which we come across in the ancient political tradition is the concept of Danda. Danda primarily implies the sense of coercion or punishment. Danda is required for discipline. If the laid down norms of the state which are basically determined by sacred and customary laws are not obeyed by any individual or if anybody is involved in an activity which goes against the interest of the state, the king has every right to punish the guilty. So disciplining the citizens was an important activity of the king. The Buddhist canonical literature suggests that a monarch should rule on the basis of the Law of truth and righteousness; he should not allow any wrongdoing in his kingdom and should look after the poor. A king was considered as a chosen leader of the people and his important duty was to protect his people and to punish the wrongdoers.

**Tiru-k-Kural**, composed by Tiruvalluvar during the second century A.D., is considered as one of the famous classics of Tamil literature. In this text, along with other facets of life, we find important ideas related to polity. It talks about an adequate army, an industrious people, ample food, resources, wise and alert ministers, alliance with foreign powers and dependable fortifications as essentials of a state. King's qualities and duties, responsibilities of the ministers, importance of spies to keep watch on various activities within the state, diplomacy, etc. are other important issues on which we find mention in the Tiru-k-Kural. 'Statecraft consists in getting support without letting your weakness be known' (Tiru-k-Kural, cited in A.Appadorai, Indian Political Thinking).

Though monarchy was predominant in the ancient Indian polity, references to republic are also found in literary traditions. Since Alexander, the Great's invasion of India in 327-324 B.C. we come across references to many places governed by oligarchies from Greek and Roman accounts of India. Later on, the Buddhist Pali canon tells us about the existence of many republics, mainly in the foothills of the Himalayas and in North Bihar. It is suggested that these were mostly tributary to the greater kingdoms but enjoyed internal autonomy. An example of this was the Sakyas who were on the borders of modern Nepal and to whom the Buddha himself belonged. Another such example was the Vrijjian confederacy of the Lichhavis who resisted the great Ajatasatru. Steve Mulilberger, in an article entitled 'Democracy in Ancient India' has written that 'in ancient India, monarchical thinking was constantly battling with another vision, of self-rule by members of a guild, a village, or an extended kin-group, in other words, any group of equals with a common set of interests. This vision of cooperative self-government often produced republicanism and even democracy comparable to classical Greek democracy.' From various accounts, the picture of north India-between the Himalayas and the Ganges-during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. suggests the existence of a number of Janapadas and that this was also the period of growth of towns and cities in India. In the Janapadas, there were Sanghas or Ganas managing independently

their territory. Details of the working of such assemblies can be found both in Brahmanical and Buddhist literature. From Panini's account (5<sup>th</sup> B.C.), we find references to the process of decision making through voting. In the Buddhist literature, we find rules concerning the voting in monastic assemblies, their membership and their quorums. All these point to the fact that democratic values and public opinion were very much respected in ancient political tradition in spite of the dominant trend of monarchical government.

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### 1.3 STATE AND SOVEREIGNTY IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

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Coming of Islam in India and the establishment of the Muslim political authority marked the beginning of a distinct phase in the Indian political thought. Islamic political thought is centred around the teaching of Muhammad and the belief in the universality of the law of the Koran. In contrast to the Vedantic philosophy, the Muslims consider Koran as the only and final authority. Before the coming of Islam, the political structure in India was not based on the philosophy and belief of a single text. Rather various religious traditions contributed towards the development of political traditions in ancient India. In Islamic thought the Shariat based on the Koran is considered as the final authority and the purpose of the state is to serve the Shariat. In matters of governance, the Muslim elite were influenced by political ideas in Islam. Based on two authoritative texts written during the Muslim rule in India- *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* and *Ain-i-Akbari* dealing with the nuances of governance- we can formulate our ideas about the dominant trend of the political thought of medieval India. *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* was written by Khwaja Ziauddin Barani. In this book Barani recapitulates and further elaborates the political philosophy of the Sultanate on the basis of his earlier narrative, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi*. Some scholars are of opinion that Barani's ideas carry a sense of religious fanaticism. Keeping in mind the fact that Barani belonged to a period when Islam was just making its ground in India, we may overlook this limitation in Barani's ideas. Apart from this limitation, Barani's ideas related to kingship in medieval period are of immense importance. The king as the representative of God on earth is considered as the source of all powers and functions of the state. Barani is of the opinion that whatever means the king adopts to discharge his duties is justified so long as his aim is the service of religion. In the following passage, we find Barani's suggestions to the king as to how to discharge his functions as the head of the state.

According to Al Barani, "It is the duty of the Sultans before they have made up their minds about an enterprise or policy and published it among the people, to reflect carefully on the likelihood of its success and failure as well as its effects on their position, on the religion and the state, and on the army. In Barani's opinion the king should devote himself to governance of his state in such a way that helps him in reaching nearer to God. Welfare of the religion and the state should be the ideal of a good state. A king should be guided by wise men. Bureaucracy is required to run the administration and Barani is an advocate of blue blood aristocracy. He talks about the necessity of hierarchy in administration and points out the composition, classification, nature and relation of bureaucracy with the Sultan and the people of the state. He is emphatically against the promotion of low-born men. He writes that 'The noble born men in the king's court will bring him honour, but if he favours low born men, they will disgrace him in both the worlds'. He says that kingship is based on two pillars- administration and conquest and it is on the army that both the pillars depend. He also emphasises on king's concern regarding internal security and foreign relations.

Alongwith the enforcement of the Shariat, to Barani, dispensing of justice is an essential function of a sovereign. Implementation of law and obedience to law should be the primary concern of a king. Barani refers to four sources of law: a) the Koran b) the **Hadish** (traditions of prophet) c) the **Ijma** (opinions and rulings of the majority of Muslim theologians and d) **Qiyas** (speculative method of deduction). To this he added **Zawabit** or state law as an important source of law in administering the state. With the changing complexion of **society** and the growing complexities of administration in addition to the accepted principles of traditional Islamic law, Barani advocated for **Zawabit** or the state laws whose foundation is non-religious. State laws cannot be contradictory to the orders of the Shariat **and** its primary objective is to regulate the works of various governmental departments and to foster loyalty. Barani also **talks** about the recognition of individual rights, i.e. the rights of wife, children, old servants, slaves, etc. and he considers the recognition of people's rights as the basis of the state. Punishment was considered as an essential means to maintain **discipline** in the state. Barani refers to various circumstances of the punishments, particularly the death punishment to be awarded by the king. The real importance of **Fatwa-i-Jahandari** lies in the fact that it shows in what ways the original Islamic theory of kingship went through changes over the years in the Indian context. Barani's vast experience in the working of the **Delhi Sultanate** and the prevailing social order get reflected in his political ideas.

The other valuable text on statecraft explaining the dominant trend of political ideas during the Mughal rule in India is **Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari***. Abul Fazl was one of the most important thinkers of the sixteenth century India. Being a great scholar having sound knowledge of different fields of learning in the Muslim and the Hindu traditions, he had contributed in formulating many of Akbar's political ideas. Abul Fazl was influenced by the idea of the divine nature of royal power. He made a distinction between a true king and a selfish ruler. A true king should not be concerned much about himself and power, rather people's well being should be his **prime** concern. To him, an ideal sovereign is like a father who rules for the common welfare and is guided by the law of God. Though Abul Fazl believed in 'the divine light of royalty', he did not envisage any role for the intermediaries to communicate the divine **order**. Abul Fazl says, 'Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun....Modern language calls this light *farri izidi* (the divine light) and the tongue of antiquity called it *kiyan khwarah* (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of any one'. The Ulemas and the Mujtahids, like the Brahmins in Hinduism, acted as authority and interpreter of customary laws to king. But in Abul Fazl's formulation, the intermediaries are not required to interpret religious and holy law and the king himself is expected to judge and interpret holy law. Abul Fazl writes that 'when the time of reflection comes, and men shake off the prejudices of their education, the thread of the web of religious blindness break and the eye sees the glory of harmoniousness...**although some are enlightened** many would observe silence from fear of fanatics who lust for blood, but look like men.... The people will naturally look to their king and expect **him** to be their spiritual leader as well, for a king possesses, independent of men, the ray of divine wisdom, which banishes from his heart everything that is conflicting. A king will, therefore, sometimes observe the element of harmony in a **multitude** of things.... Now this is the case with the monarch of the present age. He now is the spiritual guide of the nation'. At the core of his political ideas was the belief that the king should be guided by the principles of universal good and to fulfill his royal duty, he could go beyond the holy law. This was a significant shift in matters of governance compared to earlier political thinking. The reforms introduced by

Akbar through the abolition of *jizya* collected from the non-Muslims or a ban on cow slaughter reflected the spirit of new political theory articulated in *Ain-i-Akbari*. Abul Fazl was a believer in strong centralised monarchical government and for better governance he advocated the distribution of works among various departments. It was with the help of a highly centralised bureaucracy that the Mughal sovereign ruled over the empire. Abul Fazl's classified society into a four tier system, where rulers and warriors occupied the first position. Learned people were placed in the second category, artisans and merchants in the third and the labourers belonged to the fourth category. Although this was not based on an, egalitarian philosophy he talked about the importance of each category for the welfare of the state. Thus the picture of political authority that emerges from the study of *Ain-i-Akbari* was of a centralised monarchy and the governing principle of the state was the well being of its people.

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## 1.4 RELIGION AND POLITY

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Discussion on the pre-modern Indian political thought will remain incomplete if we do not take into account the relationship between religion and polity. Let us begin with the views shared by Gandhi and Maulana Azad regarding religion and politics. Gandhi said that those who talk about the separation of religion and politics do not know what religion is. Maulana Azad wrote, that 'There will be nothing left with us if we separate politics from religion'. It is interesting to note that these two great Indian thinkers belonged to two different religious traditions but both were of the opinion that religion cannot be separated from politics. It may be little bewildering as to how we can claim secularism as the guiding principle of the Indian political tradition. It may sound contradictory but if we analyse carefully, the inner meaning of political ideas expressed in our various religious traditions, it would be clear to us as to how religion and state are integrated in our political philosophy. The history of India shows that ours is a unique civilisation which has, over the years, accommodated various religious traditions. In every religion, whether it is Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism or Christianity, with the evolution of society and new developments, various sects emerged having differences in expressing their loyalty to the almighty. However these differences were not meant for establishing one's superiority over the other. Each religion talks about moral values and one's duty towards the other and the society at large. References to the virtues of honesty, humility, selflessness, compassion for the poor, etc. are scattered in the teachings of various religious orders. In the sections on ancient and medieval polity, which we have discussed in this unit, you might have noticed that the cardinal principle of kingship as suggested by various texts was to take care of the interests of his subjects. Nowhere the distinction has been made among subjects along religious lines although there might have been individual rulers who deviated from this principle. Those deviations should be considered as aberrations rather than the guiding principles of kingship, Here it would be pertinent to refer to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan who said that 'the religious impartiality of the Indian State is not to be confused with secularism or atheism. Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious tradition of India. It tries to build up a fellowship of believers, not by subordinating individual qualities to the group mind but by bringing them into harmony with each other. This fellowship is based on the principle of diversity in unity which alone has the quality of creativeness'. (S.Radhakrishnan, Recovery of Faith, 1956). The point to be noted here is that the meaning of secularism is based on our religious tradition. When we look at our past, we find that in the days of Brahmanical domination, a section of our society started

looking for alternative ways to realise the ultimate truth and this search resulted in the emergence of Jainism and Buddhism. Many people including the ruling authority welcomed the new religious traditions. Similarly when Islam came to India there might have been attempts by a few to make Islam, state religion but we find that the same period witnessed the growth of Sufism or Akbar's Tauhid-i-Ilahi (called Din-i-Ilahi) which focused on universalism. The same period is important for the growth of Bhakti movement. The Bhakti doctrine preached human equality which is considered as direct impact of Islamic thought. It dreamt of a society based on justice and equality in which men of all creeds would be able to develop their full moral and spiritual stature. The Sufi orders had an influence on the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, and among the followers of Guru Nanak were both Hindus and Muslims. A Muslim chronicler of Shivaji wrote that Shivaji, during military campaign, tried to avoid any insulting action against the Muslims 'and if a copy of the Quran was captured by his soldiers, it was supposed to be respectfully restored to the Muslims'. (Muhammad Hashim Khafi Khan, Muntakhab Lubab, Tr. by J.Dawson, 1960). There will be no dearth of references in our various religious traditions to suggest that at the core of our various traditions lies the spirit of tolerance, universalism and compassion for the humanity. These teachings from religious traditions are expected to be the guiding principles of governance. Rajdharma suggests more about the sovereign's responsibility towards his subjects rather than misuse of power given to the sovereign by his subjects. It is within this framework that one should try to interpret the coexistence of religion and polity in India rather than finding the meaning of secular state as state divorced from religion. So when many modern political thinkers give importance to religion in their political philosophy, we must try to understand its significance in proper historical perspective. At the same time one has to be cautious about the misuse of religious sentiments for particular sectarian interest.

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## 1.5 SUMMARY

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The unit deals broadly with the evolution of the Indian political thought till the time of modern period. We have discussed the emergence of state and how various texts explained in detail about the role of the sovereign. Monarchy was no doubt the predominant form of government but within it the roles of its various constituents have been clearly spelt out. Concept of bureaucracy, welfare state, individual rights, and public opinion, mentioned in various texts, give the impression of a very developed scientific thinking prevailing in our early traditions. Values and morality were given more importance to individual likings in the matters of governance. Cutting across time, the dominant ideology of the state was to protect the interest of its people. Religious idealism was given prominence to promote harmony and universalism within the state. In the backdrop of this discussion, we will now move on to the development of the modern Indian political thought.

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## 1.6 EXERCISES

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1. Explain the major features of political ideas in Ancient India.
2. Discuss the important ideas regarding sovereign authority during the Medieval period.
3. In what way has religion influenced the polity in pre-modern India?



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# UNIT 2 ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE AND COLONIAL MODERNITY

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## Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Different Strands of Recent Scholarship
  - 2.2.1 The Neo-Gandhian Critique
  - 2.2.2 The Subaltern Studies School
  - 2.2.3 The Anthropological Studies in the U.S.
  - 2.2.4 Edward Said's Orientalism
- 2.3 Nationalism and Colonial Modernity
  - 2.3.1 Nationalism as "Difference"
  - 2.3.2 Anxieties about the Nation's Women
  - 2.3.3 Cultural Split and Liberal Ideas
  - 2.3.4 A Different Sequence and Different Modernity
- 2.4 Nationalism, History and Colonial Knowledge
  - 2.4.1 Construction of India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century
  - 2.4.2 Nationalist Imagination and Indian History
  - 2.4.3 Orientalism and the Colony's Self Knowledge
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Exercises

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, an attempt will be undertaken to understand the concept of Orientalism and the question of modernity and its colonial roots in India. This is a relatively new field that has opened up new questions and has significantly reconstituted the old field of colonial history, both for the ex-colonised societies as well as of the colonisers themselves. The history of Europe too, is now increasingly marked by an awareness of the ways in which the colonial encounter crucially shaped the self-image of Europe itself. In this unit we will mainly be concerned, however; with the history of the Indian subcontinent.

Although the unit will be concerned with the debate on 'the colonial period, it is necessary to understand that it is a field that is irrevocably constituted by the present context. In the last few decades, particularly since the 1980s, this field has given rise to a whole new body of work and serious, often very sharp debates among scholars. It was during this period that an intense and fresh engagement with the whole question of our colonial modernity came to the fore. What is crucially important about this development in the scholarship on the Indian subcontinent is that it focuses, unlike earlier writings on colonial history, on the *politics of*

*knowledge* implicated in that history. In a very significant way, it foregrounds the manner in which our knowledge of 'our own' history – and our own selves – is framed by and understood through categories produced by colonial knowledge.

Before we go into a discussion of our actual subject matter, let us make a preliminary observation. Indian history today is no longer what we have known it to be so far from our history text-books. The new developments have illuminated aspects of that history that were hitherto covered in darkness. What do we mean when we say some aspects were 'covered in darkness'? It is not as though some entirely new 'facts' have been uncovered. New facts have certainly become known to us, or known facts, often considered unimportant, have acquired new meaning because *the way we look at that history has now changed*. As we will see later in the unit, the idea of history as a repository of some kind of uncontaminated truth about our past, itself has become problematic in the light of these developments. Let us keep this in mind before we proceed.

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## **2.2 DIFFERENT STRANDS OF RECENT SCHOLARSHIP**

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There are at least four different strands of scholarship that have come together since the 1980s, that have been at the root of this transformation.

### **2.2.1 The Neo-Gandhian Critique**

In the first place, there has been since the early 1980s, the reactivation of an older Gandhian critique of modernity. Central in this strand has been the work of scholars like Ashis Nandy, Veena Das and scholar-activists active in the environment and science movements like Claude Alvares and Vandana Shiva. Much of the critique of this set of scholars has been directed at a critique of science and rationality as the ruling ideological coordinates of modernity, alongside the related notion of development followed by the Nehruvian state. Though not all scholars associated with this strand have an explicitly Gandhian orientation, they broadly extend elements of Gandhi's rejection of modern Western civilisation and its faith in science and reason as the conditions of human freedom. Ashis Nandy directed his main attack on this ideological constellation of modernity; namely the constellation of science, reason and development. He also extends that critique to the nation-state itself, which he sees as the institutional embodiment of modernity, as an institution that is always intolerant of popular beliefs and ways of living. Nandy sees in the project of the modern nation-state, an inherent drive towards homogenisation, towards cultural genocide and the desire to reduce life to a few, easily definable and negotiable categories. His central argument in this respect is that notions of the self in the South Asian context have been largely fluid and it is only with the onset of the modern nation-state that the attempts have been made to fix identity into singular categories like Hindus and Muslims. He points to the fact that even today, there are hundreds of communities who combine elements of both Hinduism and Islam and find it difficult to 'classify' themselves in neat and exclusive categories. Such an argument is substantiated, for instance by anthropological surveys by scholars like K. Suresh Singh.

### **2.2.2 The Subaltern Studies School**

The second strand can be identified in the work of the Subaltern Studies School of Indian

Historiography (henceforth referred to as 'Subaltern historians'). This school too made its first public appearance on the scene in the early 1980s – although its work began in the late 1970s. This group of historians and some political scientists came from a primarily Left-wing political background and much of their initial work was a continuation of the concerns that they had developed through the impact of Maoist political practice in the 1970s. Important among scholars of this school were historians Ranajit Guha, Gyanendra Pandey, Shahid Amin, David Hardiman and Dipesh Chakravarty and political scientists like Partha Chatterjee and to some extent, Sudipta Kaviraj. The common thread that links the effort of the early work of the Subaltern historians with that of scholars like Ashis Nandy was a critique of nationalism and nationalist historiography and a concern with popular consciousness. Through a series of volumes published in the 1980s, the Subaltern historians launched a major critique of nationalist historiography which subsumed all histories into the 'History of the Nation'. By initiating this critique, they sought to recover what Ranajit Guha called “the small voice of history”. They sought to understand what those who participated in the nationalist or peasant struggles in the colonial period thought, why they participated and what were the forms of their motivation and participation. In other words, they sought to recover the subjectivity and agency – the autonomy – of the subaltern classes. The word 'subaltern', as many of you would know, comes from the writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In the early subaltern studies, this term was used to distinguish it from other more restrictive categories like class. 'Subaltern' simply means 'subordinate' and could be used to designate different kinds of social, economic and political subordination. As Guha put it in his "Preface" to the first volume, it would "include subordination in South Asian society whether it is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way.”

### 2.2.3 The Anthropological Studies in the US

The third strand comes from within the field of area studies from anthropologists like Bernard Cohn, largely situated in the United States. Bernard Cohn's work spans a much longer period starting from the mid-1950s. He had been writing on questions relating to colonial knowledge of India and the ways in which this knowledge transformed the very society it claimed to study. His researches also showed how these knowledges constituted political subjectivities in the colonial world. Under his stewardship a whole generation of scholars from the University of Chicago, like Nicholas Dirks, Arjun Appadurai and others worked on the different modalities of colonial knowledge to show how it was thoroughly embedded in the colonial project and power. It was a knowledge that provided the intellectual justification for Britain's civilising mission in India, where, in Ranajit Guha's words, "an official view of caste, a Christian missionary view of Hinduism and an Orientalist view of Indian society as a 'static, timeless, spaceless' and internally undifferentiated monolith,..were all produced by the complicity of power and knowledge." (Ranjit Guha, "Introduction" to Bernard Cohn (1988) *An Anthropologist among Historians and Other Essays*, p. xix). Around the 1980s, this anthropological work gets reconfigured into a different kind of framework that explicitly situates itself within the field of our discussion. In an influential essay published in 1984, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia", Cohn showed, for instance, how the colonial censuses not only produced knowledge about India and its people, but also produced an India that was not necessarily the India that existed prior to the advent of colonial rule.

## 2.2.4 Edward Said's Orientalism

Finally, there is the work of Palestinian-American scholar, Edward Said that could be said to have made possible the coming together of these different bodies of work. With the publication in the 1978, of Said's highly acclaimed tract *Orientalism*, different efforts to deal with the continuing legacy of the West in the former colonies as well as in immigrant communities in the West received a major fillip. In this tract, which became very influential in and around the mid-1980s, Said showed how certain constructions of the East or the 'Orient' have been crucial to Europe's self-image. He showed through a reading of major literary texts as well as political documents, parliamentary speeches and such other sources, how the 'Orient' was a peculiar European construction – backward, superstitious, barbaric and irrational on the one hand and exotic and pristine on the other. Said emphasises, however, that it should not be assumed that "the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths"; it should be understood as a "body of theory and practice". This body of knowledge, he argues, undoubtedly had an older history, but "in the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character."

It can easily be seen that all the strands of scholarship mentioned above had already begun in different ways to challenge the very frameworks of knowledge that had dominated our understandings of our history. With the exception of the early Subaltern Studies school, all the others had explicitly begun asking fundamental questions about Western knowledge – especially colonial knowledge – itself. Even in the case of the Subaltern historians, their relentless interrogations of nationalist and elitist history-writing and the quest for subaltern autonomy led them eventually to question some of the very crucial ways in which nationalism itself was structured by western knowledge. It should also be mentioned at this stage, that these different and diverse strands could come together because of another intellectual development in Europe and the United States. This was what is loosely called the post-structuralist current – or what is often loosely termed 'postmodernism' – which launched a vigorous internal critique of the entire tradition of Western philosophy and metaphysics since the Enlightenment. However, that is not our immediate concern here and we shall return to some of its more relevant aspects later. Let us now examine the main contentions of 'colonial discourse theory'.

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## 2.3 NATIONALISM AND COLONIAL MODERNITY

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While we have delineated the main currents of thought that went into the renewed interrogations of colonial history, our main concern in the rest of the unit will be mainly with the work of Subaltern historians and scholars like Kaviraj and Nandy. It is not within the scope of this unit to make an assessment of the entire body of work produced under the rubric of Subaltern Studies. What we are concerned with here mainly is the later body of work – what Sumit Sarkar has called the 'late Subaltern Studies'. For it is there that the concern with Orientalism and colonial discourse acquires its most articulate expression. It is there that the most sustained and thorough-going examination of both colonial discourse and the peculiar

features of what Partha Chatterjee has called "our modernity" has been carried out. Much of the later work of Bernard Cohn himself and his students like Nicholas Dirks and Gyan Prakash too can be said to fall broadly within the same body of work. In the discussion that follows, we will discuss certain themes that emerge from this body of work, rather than proceed in a strictly chronological order.

We have mentioned that the early work of the Subaltern Studies scholars was concerned with the search for subaltern autonomy; that is, of trying to understand forms of subaltern consciousness and their divergences from those of nationalist political elites, even when they participate in movements led by the latter. This concern naturally led to explorations of how elite consciousness too is/was formed in a context of colonial subjugation. It led to an exploration of nationalist discourse, its structure and assumptions, as well as to explorations of forms of subaltern consciousness. Two things started becoming apparent in the course of these explorations. First, that nationalism was not simply one monolithic ideological formation that every modern society must have. The situation was complicated by the fact that societies like India's were inserted into modernity by the agency of colonialism. The desire to be modern here was, therefore, enmeshed with the desire to be free and self-governing; that is to be 'Indian'. Early nationalist elite were forced to articulate their politics in a condition of subjugation where they simultaneously aspired to the principles of universal equality and liberty embodied by modern thought, and had to mark their difference from the West. Second, as a consequence, it was also becoming apparent that nationalism therefore, also involved a formidable and creative intellectual intervention, formulating and defending its main postulates in the battlefield of politics, as Partha Chatterjee put it. With the publication in early 1983, of Benedict Anderson's now classic *Imagined Communities*, the possibilities had opened out for a more sustained investigation of how nations are invented. With the publication of this immensely insightful book, the idea that there is anything natural or eternal about nations was laid at rest. All nations, Anderson argued, are imagined communities. We should clarify one common misconception here. When Anderson suggests that nations are imagined communities, he does not suggest that nations are therefore 'unreal' or 'fictitious'. On the contrary, he claims, they are real and call forth such passion that people are ready to die and kill for it, *precisely because they are brought into existence as a consequence of collective imagination.*

### 2.3.1 Nationalism as 'Difference'

Let us now turn to some of the features of nationalism and colonial modernity as we know it today from the work of scholars mentioned above. Attaining the nationhood and self-governance, the nationalists understood, was the only way to be modern. That was the way the world they discovered, actually was. The great intellectual question that the nineteenth century intelligentsia had posed to itself was "why did India become a subject nation? How did a small island nation called Britain attain mastery over this huge landmass?" Their answer, we now know, was that this was because India, on the eve of colonial subjugation, was internally divided. That there were hundreds of different principalities and quarrels, deep internal divisions like those of caste and it was these that made it impossible for the country to resist colonisation. In the modern world, these could not continue. If we have to become free, we had to overcome the deep internal divisions and usher in a form of self-government that will recognise all its people as free citizens. The only way this could be achieved was

through the attainment of nationhood, for that was the way modern societies existed. Yet, it was something that troubled the emergent nationalist elite. How could they be modern and yet not simply ape the ways of the Western colonial masters. Being modern and striving for nationhood, that is for liberation from colonial rule, required the subjugated nation, therefore, to *mark* its difference from the rulers. It had to be a modernity that was different in crucial ways from the baggage of western modernity as they saw it. The search for a different, Indian modernity was then what animated the discourse of nationalism in India. In his essay on "The Census and Objectification", for instance, Bernard Cohn cited from a 1943 text by Jawaharlal Nehru where Nehru observed: "I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere... They are both [i.e. the East and the West] part of me, and though they help me in both the East and the West, but they also create a feeling of spiritual loneliness... I am a stranger and an alien in the West... But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling."

This above quotation by Nehru highlights one of the most abiding inner conflicts of Indian, but more generally, of all postcolonial nationalisms. If we remember that Nehru was by far the most radical of modernists among all the nationalists, we can imagine what would have been the situation of other nationalist leaders. In fact this is an anxiety that is evident among the intellectual elite of Indian society long before the formal appearance of nationalism towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ashis Nandy for instance, showed in an early essay that there was a resurgence of the phenomenon of *Sati* in Bengal towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Through an examination of statistical evidence, he argues that it was only in this period that "the rite suddenly came to acquire the popularity of a legitimate orgy." Before that it had declined substantially in most parts of the country. Nandy suggested that it was in "the groups made psychologically marginal by their exposure to Western impact" that the rite became popular. These groups therefore felt the pressure "to demonstrate to others as well as to themselves their allegiance to traditional high culture." The Bengali elite being the closest to western contact was, thus most affected by this anxiety to be different. The question of modernity was of course not yet on the agenda at this time. More to the point, in that respect, is Dipesh Chakravarty's reading of early nationalist tracts in Bengal that concerned domesticity and the position of women. While most writers of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were clear that "women of this country" were "uncivilised, lazy, quarrelsome" and therefore bad for domestic happiness, due to lack of education, they were also convinced that education itself could produce undesirable traits in women. For education could also make them "arrogant, lazy, immodest and defiant of authority". This was clearly a fear about modern education and exposure to Western ideas that was being expressed by the early elite.

### **2.3.2 Anxieties About the Nation's Women**

The concern with women is evident in both, Nandy's exploration of Sati and Chakravarty's explorations of domesticity. It is the 'Women's Question' therefore, argues Partha Chatterjee, that becomes the site for a major nationalist intervention. Chatterjee explores what he calls the nationalist resolution of the women's question to suggest that the way in which nationalism sought to mark out its difference was by demarcating a sphere of inner sovereignty. What is the nationalist resolution of the women's question? Chatterjee notices that in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the appearance of nationalism, all the important questions of social

reform centred on the status of women, (like widow remarriage, education of women, against child marriages etc), disappear from public discourse. This happens, he contends, because nationalism starts its journey by demarcating an 'inner' and an 'outer' sphere and declaring itself sovereign in the inner, cultural sphere. In the outer sphere its subjugation is a given fact, but in the inner domain of culture it claims complete sovereignty. It refuses to make the question of women a matter of negotiation with the colonial state. On the other hand, it does not simply rest content with the old status of women. It rather embarks on a project of creating a 'new woman', educated, active in public life and at the same time fully aware of her domestic, womanly duties. This 'inner domain' then, suggests Chatterjee, becomes the sphere where nationalism begins to mark its difference from colonial, Western modernity. But by valourising cultural difference, nationalism was not always being modern. In fact, as many other studies show the assertion of cultural difference often became a way of relegating questions of internal inequalities between groups to the sphere of the 'unspeakable'. The problem then, Chatterjee suggests is that there appeared to be a contradiction lodged at the heart of the nationalist project: its search for modernity was marred by a struggle against modernity in some sense. "What was national was not always secular and modern, and the popular and democratic quite often traditional and sometimes fanatically anti-modern."

### **2.3.3 Cultural Split and Liberal Ideas**

Sudipta Kaviraj introduces three more interesting aspects in his delineation of the features of colonial modernity. First, he argues, modern colonial education introduced a split in the Indian cultural life, by bringing into being two "rather exclusive spheres of English and vernacular discourse." The concerns that animated these different spheres were very different. While the English-speaking world was more concerned with ideas of individual liberty, those working in the vernacular world were far less concerned with democracy as a form of government. The vernacular nationalist intelligentsia was more concerned with the problem of "collective freedom of the Indian people from British rule" rather than with that of individual freedom. Indian nationalist elite encountered the great liberal ideas of equality, freedom and autonomy in a context of subjugation and were therefore, more immediately concerned with issues of national sovereignty. They, therefore, chose to transfer these ideas into their own concerns. Here, we see the second feature: Liberal ideas, Kaviraj contends, did have "a deep and profound influence in Indian political argument" but this influence was not in terms of implanting liberal ideas but nationalist ones. This is not a minor or trivial difference but in a sense crucial, for as Kaviraj points out, the idea of equality between nations or societies can be completely blind to the idea of internal equality within the national community. Hence, even somebody like Gandhi could easily justify the caste system while claiming national equality and freedom from the British,

### **2.3.4 A Different Sequence and Different Modernity**

This second feature, according to Kaviraj, is also linked to a third: Modernity in India followed a very different sequence from that in the West. Modernity is a historical constellation, Kaviraj argues, that comprises three distinct processes: capitalist industrial production, political institutions of liberal democracy and the emergence of a society where old community bonds have been largely dissolved and the process of individuation has taken place. This means that in the place of old forms of belonging, there have emerged new interest-based associations.

This is what is called in political theory, 'the space of civil society'. In the historical trajectory of the West, democracy emerged after the other two processes had developed to a high degree. Initial disciplining of the working class, for instance, took place in a context where there was no possibility of democratic resistance. In fact, democratic aspirations were, at least partly, a consequence of the process of capitalist industrialisation. In India, on the other hand, democracy and parliamentary institutions preceded the other two processes. Kaviraj links this different sequence to a kind of populist politics that comes to dominate the political scene in India and many post-colonial countries.

It is this problem that Partha Chatterjee has recently conceptualised in his idea of "political society". Chatterjee argues that what is called civil society in the West is a domain of the individuated, rights-bearing citizen that is governed by rules of free entry and exit and individual autonomy. Non-Western societies, he suggests, are marked by a permanent hiatus between this domain of civil society, which is governed by the normative ideals of Western modernity and the vast areas of society that relate to the developmental state as 'populations' that are subject to the policy interventions by the state. Here, it is the responsibility of the government rather than any notion of rights that becomes the ground on which claims of these populations are negotiated. We cannot go into a longer discussion of this concept as elaborated by Chatterjee, but it is important to note that according to him, one of the crucial defining features of 'political society' is that it is a domain where the idea of a community still holds a powerful sway – as opposed to the individual who is the defining characteristic of civil society. It is the argument of scholars like Chatterjee and Kaviraj that this peculiar feature of non-Western modernity should not be understood as a 'lack' or 'underdevelopment' or as an 'incomplete modernity'. Rather, they should be seen as the specific way in which modernity in the colonial context came to be constituted. It has a different history from that of Western modernity and is likely to have a different future.

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## 2.4 NATIONALISM, HISTORY AND COLONIAL KNOWLEDGE

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So far we have talked about nationalism, assuming that there was one single entity called nationalism – and that was *Indian* nationalism. As it happens, there was neither a single nationalism, nor for that matter, a single Indian nationalism. We know, for example, that the **Indian National Congress** espoused one kind of Indian nationalism that we may call 'secular-nationalism'. We also know that the Muslim League espoused, at least from around 1940 onwards, a Pakistani nationalism. This is often referred to as the 'two-nation theory'. This was also propounded by someone like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who stood for an explicitly Hindu-Indian nationalism. We also know for instance, that there was during the nationalist period a Bengali nationalism, an Assamese nationalism, a Malayali nationalism and such other nationalisms. The question is that if there was an already existing object/nation called India, how do we account for the fact that so many different people saw it in so many different ways? Sudipta Kaviraj answers this question, in his well-known essay "The Imaginary Institution of India", by claiming that the India that we talk of so unproblematically today, was not really a discovery; it was **an invention!** By calling it a discovery as Nehru did in his *Discovery of India*, we seem to imply that "it was already there", presumably from time immemorial. If you are asked today to describe what India is, you will most probably point to its geographical boundaries stretching from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea;



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you will recount the different linguistic, religious, caste and tribal groups that inhabit this landmass. You will also probably say that because of all this India represents a 'unity in diversity'. And yet, what if you are told that before the nineteenth century, nobody exactly knew the physical stretch of this landmass and that our ancestors had no idea of how many communities and religions existed in this land. Nor did they have any idea of how many people there were in each community. What then is the picture of India that you will draw? How did the early nationalists draw the picture of their India?

### 2.4.1 Construction of India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Take for instance the fact that the first tentative maps of 'India' – the name for India too did not exist at that time – were drawn up by James Rennell, a colonial official in Bengal, between 1782 and 1788. It was only by 1818 that, with the East India Company's annexation of large parts of the subcontinent, that an idea of the geographical stretch of the land began to emerge. It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the idea of a geographical entity called 'India' was consolidated. As Mathew Edney's detailed documentation and analysis of the mapping of India argues, "In constructing a uniform and comprehensive archive of India, the British fixed the scope and character of the region's territories. They located and mapped the human landscape of villages, forts, roads, irrigation schemes, and boundaries within the physical landscape of hills, rivers and forests..." It was also in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the first censuses of India were done and only in 1881 that the first comprehensive census took place. It was then that the idea of the different communities that inhabited the land became available, as also their numbers. But this was not all. It was not simply that the British compiled information about the land in an objective manner. To count and make sense of a huge population of a land like the Indian subcontinent, they had to classify the population into different groups. As there were no clear-cut notions of community, the British defined them in their own ways for purposes of classification. Large categories such as 'Hindu' and 'Muslim', as well as those of caste (in which they fitted thousands of *jatis*) were in a sense, colonial constructs, devised primarily for the purpose of census enumerations. It is not as though religious denominations and *jatis* did not 'exist' before the censuses, but there were large zones of indefinable 'grey areas' that were not easily amenable to classification. These hundreds of categories had to be reduced to a few, easily handle-able, administrative categories. For that purpose their boundaries had to be precisely defined. In doing so, colonial rule actually created new categories and fixed them in certain specific ways, as a lot of historical work now shows. This is not a matter that we can go into at any length here, but a few points should be noted.

In his essay mentioned above, Kaviraj has made a distinction between what he calls 'fuzzy' and 'enumerated' communities. One of the ways in which the very act of enumeration and classification transformed the way in which communities exist, is captured by Kaviraj in this distinction. Individuals in pre-modern, fuzzy communities did not have a fixed sense of identity but that does not mean that they had no sense of identity. Individuals, he argues, could on appropriate occasions, describe themselves as vaishnavas, Bengalis or maybe Rarhis or *Kayasthas*, villagers and so on. But none of these would be a complete description of their identity. Each of these could very precisely define their conduct in specific situations but it was radically different from the identity of modern enumerated communities in one way. It was only when one singular identity was fixed that they would begin to ask, as modern communities do, about how many there were in the world, what was their

representation in public institutions, how were they being discriminated against and so on. So, as Dipesh Chakravarty asserts, "by the 1890s, Hindu and Muslim leaders were quoting census figures at each other to prove that whether or not they had received their legitimate share of benefits (such as employment and education) from British rule." In that sense, modern notions of majority and minority and such other questions become possible to pose only with the emergence of such enumerated communities. It is from this angle that Gyanendra Pandey contends, in his *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, that even though there were sectarian conflicts among Hindus and Muslims before colonialism, they were usually local conflicts with many different roots. They were not communalism in the modern sense because there was no sense of a 'community' in the first place. At any rate, he argues, there was no sense of an all-India Hindu or Muslim community before colonial practices and knowledge inscribed this difference as essential to Indian society. We can see for instance, that the whole discourse about the Muslim population overtaking the Hindu population could only begin to take shape once the idea of a majority and minority was made possible through practices of enumeration and classification.

One of the major facts that emerges then from the discussion of colonial governmental practices is that our very idea of India, its geographical boundaries, its population and its cultural composition etc are all formed by the knowledge produced by the colonial state. What is most important is that all subsequent politics, including nationalist politics, was shaped by this knowledge. In the initial phases of the nationalist movement, it was not really clear what nationalism was all about. There was a critique of colonial rule, to be sure. But then, this critique was not being mounted on behalf of a clearly defined nation called India. As many studies have shown, there was often a Bengali nationalism or an Assamese nationalism and such others that were the first identifications of the anticolonial elite. As the idea of India became more entrenched and as its contours became more clearly defined, nationalism quickly appropriated this India as the ideal candidate for the new nation-to-be.

## 2.4.2 Nationalist Imagination and Indian History

There was one problem, however. How could a so recent an entity claim to any kind of legitimacy as a nation? For the very idea of nationhood required that the new political community lay claim to an ancient history. For the large part of the nineteenth century therefore, we see early nationalists vigorously at work to invent a history of India. As Kaviraj puts, in this period, particularly in Bengal, "history breaks out everywhere". Important thinkers like Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay proclaim, "we must have a history". Bankim in fact, puts it more vehemently that "Even when they go hunting for birds, sahebs [i.e. Britishers] write its history, but alas, Bengalis have no history." Notice that even at this stage, Bankim was only thinking of Bengal and Bengali as his nation; nevertheless the desire to have a history was already powerful." What does this search for history mean? Does it mean that Bengalis or Indians had no past? Certainly that was not the case. But as in all premodern cultures, the relationship to the past was of a different kind. What is it that made 'history' in the modern sense different from the earlier accounts of the past? If we look at the accounts that are available in the precolonial period, they are either accounts of genealogies of kings or they are orally transmitted stories of particular events. For there to be history there had to be a community – an enumerated community – whose history it would be. There had to be a more concretely and rigidly defined sense of a community or a people whose history could then be written. This sense arose only when the idea of 'India' became a tangible reality,

thanks to colonial governmental practices referred to above. Much of the effort of the aationalists of different hues was directed then at defining the political community such that it could incorporate all the diverse elements within the land called India. And this India had to have a history. Where did the resources for writing a history of India come from?

### 2.4.3 Orientalism and the Colony's Self-knowledge

It is well known that academic knowledge about India – its history – was produced by the efforts of the great Orientalist scholars of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, by British Orientalists like William Jones, can be considered as a milestone in this enterprise. O. P. Kejariwal's *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past* for instance documents the work of this pioneering institution in the excavation of India's past. You might be surprised to know, as Kejariwal was when he started looking at the work of the Asiatic Society, that till as late as 1834, the names of ancient emperors like Samudragupta and Chandragupta Maurya were not known to anybody. He even mentions with some excitement, "I discovered that even Asoka and Kanishka, not to mention their dynasties, were unknown names till the Society's work brought them to light". He goes on to observe that it was astonishing for him to see that even the history of other well known dynasties like the Palas, the Senas, the Maukharies, the Valabhies and such others were unknown till the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Asiatic Society scholars brought them to light. This is not the place to dwell on the details of the voluminous work done by Orientalist scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to unearth the history of India. What is important for us to note is that if right upto the 19<sup>th</sup> century, what we know today as the "ancient nation" of India did not have a clear geographical form, did not have an account of the different cultures and communities that lived in it, did not have a history, then what was it that made possible the story that we know today – that 'India' is an ancient nation, which had an apparent Golden Age in the time of the Gupta and Mauryan Empires, and so on? The point being made here by scholars whom we have been discussing above is that India, like most other nations is a relatively new and modern entity. Like other nations, it is the work of a collective imagination that was at work from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, which deftly appropriated the work done by Orientalist scholars, in order to produce the narrative of a great and ancient civilisation. This was the nationalist imagination that retrospectively produced a History of the Nation, in which all the separate histories of the different entities that today form a part of the landmass called India, became reconfigured as the History of India. So when 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalists like Bankimchandra proclaimed the need for history, they were actually proclaiming the need for a history of this modern, rationalistic kind. This is why Kaviraj claims that India was an object of invention and not a discovery, That is why there is something worth thinking about for instance, in Kaviraj's claim that incorporating the history of the Satavahanas or of the Indus valley civilisation into a history of 'India' involves a certain disingenuousness. Or, let us say, on the basis of present geographical boundaries can we then lay claim to the Indus Valley civilisation and Mohenjodaro because they fall in present-day Pakistan? In other words, how legitimate is the effort to claim all past histories as parts of present-day India's national history?

**Now**, the fact that "we did not have a history" before the 19<sup>th</sup> century should not be understood to mean that 'we' did not have any sense or relationship with the past. Nationalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries routinely saw this as a sign of our backwardness, of a 'lack' that showed that we were not modern. Here, an important point should be kept in

mind. One of the ways in which post-structuralism has questioned the common sense of Western Rationalism since the Enlightenment is by challenging its notion of 'human history' as a singular and linear development. We know, for example, that the story of human history as a story of progress from lower to higher forms has been the basis of modern historical consciousness. Post-structuralism has, among other things, challenged the idea that there can be only one way – the historical way – of relating to the past. Again, this is not a question that we can go into in any detail here, but it is useful to bear in mind that such historical self-consciousness is a characteristic of modern enumerated communities who need to continuously provide definitions of their collective selves to themselves and to others. If premodern communities did not need any rational account of their past, it was simply because their ways of being in the world did not require them to demonstrate who they are. The notion of time in such communities marks no clear separation between mythical time and lived time. One of the ways in which this understanding of history and historical time has affected lives in the colonies – and continues to do so – is that it institutes a particular historical journey for all societies as though they were a single entity. In that story, Europe appears as the place where history is, because it is foremost in the scale of progress. All societies then become condemned to replay European history on their ground. One of the lessons of the body of work discussed above is that we have to begin writing our own histories, not by rejecting Europe but by denying it and its history the universal status that it has acquired.

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## 2.5 SUMMARY

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This unit is devoted to a thorough discussion of the concept of orientalism and the question of modernity and its colonial roots in India. This is a comparatively new field of study and has thrown up new and revealing insights for both ex-colonies and their erstwhile colonial masters. For instance, the idea that history of Europe alone cannot be a reference point when writing histories of former colonies.

The unit starts with a discussion of the different strands of scholarship on the subject. Four strands Neo-gandhian Critique, Subaltern studies School, U S based Anthropological studies and Edward Said's Orientalism have been examined. One next moves on to an examination of the questions of nationalism and colonial modernity. Here, it has been explained as to how the way nationalism evolved in the former colonies was different from its evolution in Europe. It was nationalism with a difference. The last section of the unit examines how the idea of India as we know it today was conceptualised and developed by nationalist historians of colonial India.

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## 2.6 EXERCISES

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1. Discuss different strands of thought among scholars on the question of colonial modernity.
2. Explain Nationalism's concern with orientalism and colonial discourse.
3. Discuss Nationalism and its features with reference to liberal ideas
4. Critically examine the Construction of India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
5. Discuss Orientalism and the colony's self-knowledge.

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# UNIT 3 SALIENT FEATURES OF MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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## Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Two Phases of Modern Indian Thought
- 3.3 Social Reform and the "Hindu Renaissance"
  - 3.3.1 **Two** Intellectual Moves of Reformers
  - 3.3.2 Modes of Reformist Thought
- 3.4 The Arrival of Nationalism
  - 3.4.1 The 'Inner' and 'Outer' Domains
  - 3.4.2 Concerns of Nationalists
- 3.5 The Trajectory of Muslim Thought
  - 3.5.1 The Specificity of Muslim History and Thought
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## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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This unit deals with the salient features of modern Indian political thought. This is not an easy exercise as there is no single body of thought that we can call 'Indian'. Nor is there a continuity of concerns across time – say between the early nineteenth century and the late nineteenth century. Taking a synoptic view therefore necessarily reduces the complexities and does not do full justice to minority or subordinate voices, relegating them further to the margins. You will do well to bear in mind that most of the modern Indian political and social thought is marked by the experience of the colonial encounter. It was within this universe that most of our thinkers, hailing from different communities and social groups, embarked on their intellectual-political journey.

As mentioned in the previous unit the great intellectual question that most nineteenth century thinkers had posed before themselves was: how did a huge country like India become subjugated? If that was the question before the thinkers for the most of the nineteenth century, the question before those writing in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the question of 'freedom': How can 'we' become free of colonial rule? This was a more complicated question that might appear to you today because, as we saw in the last unit, there was no pre-given entity whose freedom was being sought. So, for each set of thinkers,

the 'we' in the question above differed, We could also call this a 'search for the Self' – for that Self was never as evident to these thinkers as it is to 'us' today.

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## **3.2 TWO PHASES OF MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT**

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We can broadly divide modern Indian thought into two phases. The first phase was that of what has often been referred to as the phase of 'Social Reform'. Thinkers of this phase, as we shall see, were more concerned with the internal regeneration of indigenous society and because its first effervescence occurred in Bengal, it was often referred to as the 'Bengal renaissance'. Nationalist historians of course, even started referring to it as the Indian renaissance, but this will be an inaccurate description for reasons that we will see shortly. The second phase, more complex and textured in many ways, is the phase that we can designate as the nationalist phase. The concerns in this phase shift more decisively to questions of politics and power, and of freedom from colonial rule. It is important to remember that what we are calling the 'nationalist phase' is merely a shorthand expression, for there were precisely in this period, many more tendencies and currents that cannot simply be subsumed under the rubric of 'nationalism'. At the very least, there are important currents like the Muslim and Dalit, that mark the intellectual and political 'search for the Self' in this period.

Before we go into the specific features of the thinkers of the two broad periods that we have outlined, it is necessary to make a few clarifications. Though most scholars have tended to see these as two distinct phases or periods, this way of looking at the history of modern Indian political thought can be quite problematic. These periodisations can only be very broad and tentative ones, made for the purpose of convenience of study; on no account should they be rendered into fixed and hermetically sealed periods. In fact, we can more productively see them as two broad currents which do not necessarily follow one after the other. As we shall see, there are many social reform concerns that take on a different form and continue into the nationalist phase. In fact, the nationalist phase itself reveals two very distinct tendencies in this respect. On the one hand, there is the dominant or hegemonic nationalism, represented in the main by the Indian National Congress, where the social reform agenda is abandoned in a significant way; on the other there are other contending narratives that insist on privileging the reform agenda much to the discomfort of the nationalists. We shall soon see why. We shall also have the occasion to note that, in this respect, Gandhi remains almost the lone figure within this hegemonic nationalism, who keeps trying to bring in the reform agenda into the nationalist movement.

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## **3.3 SOCIAL REFORM AND THE 'HINDU RENAISSANCE'**

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There was a veritable explosion of intellectual activity throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in Bengal and Western India. In Bengal there was the Young Bengal movement, and publicists, thinkers and social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Keshub Chandra Sen, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Surendranath Banerjee, Swami Vivekananda and such other personalities who embodied this effervescence. In Western India there were reformers like Bal Shastri Jambhekar, Jotirao Govindrao Phule, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and Swami Dayanand Saraswati (whose activity was mainly in North India), such other luminaries who directly addressed the question of

internal regeneration of Indian society. They launched **the** most vigorous critique of their own society, with the aim of bringing it out of its backwardness. As Rammohun Roy put it, it was the "thick clouds of superstition" that "hung all over the land" (i.e. Bengal), that worried him most. As a consequence, he believed, polygamy and infanticide were rampant and **the** position of **the** Bengali woman was "a tissue of ceaseless oppressions and miseries". **Idolatory and** priestcraft were often held responsible by thinkers like Dayanand Saraswati, for the destruction of the yearning for knowledge. He believed that it was institutions such as these that had made Hindus fatalist and inert. The issues that dominated the concerns of the social reformers were primarily related to the status of women in Indian society. Sati, widow re-marriage and the education of women were **central** issues raised by the reformers. To this end, they re-interpreted tradition, often offered ruthless critiques of traditional practices and even lobbied support with the colonial government for enacting suitable legislations for banning some of the more obnoxious practices like Sati.

Needless to say, while the position of women was a matter of central concern, there was another equally important question – that of caste divisions and untouchability that became the focus of critique of many of these reformers. However, you must bear in mind that their approach to caste was different from those of reformers like Jotiba Phule and later, Dr Ambedkar. Unlike the latter, they did not seek the emancipation of the lower castes, but their assimilation into the mainstream of Hindu society. Most of the reformers held not **only** that Hindu society had become degenerate, insulated and deeply divided into hundreds of different communities and castes, but also it had become thereby incapable of forging any kind of 'common will'. Hindu society therefore, had to be reconstituted and reorganised into a single community. Swami Vivekananda or Dayanand Saraswati therefore, sought to reorganise somewhat along the lines of the Christian Church, as Ashis Nandy suggests. If Vivekananda was candid that no other society "puts its foot on the neck of the wretched so mercilessly as does that of India", Dayanand Saraswati sought to redefine caste 'in such a way that it ceased to be determined solely by birth. He sought to include the criterion of individual accomplishment 'in the determination of the caste-status of an individual.

### **3.3.1 Two Intellectual Moves of Reformers**

There are two distinct moves **made** by the reformers that we **must** bear in mind. First, their critiques drew very explicitly from the exposure to Western liberal ideas. To many of them British power was the living proof of the validity and 'invincibility' of those ideas. They were therefore, open admirers of British rule. For instance, as Bal Shastri Jambhekar saw it, a mere sixty or seventy years of British rule over Bengal had transformed it beyond recognition. He saw in the place of the "violence, oppression and **misrule**" of the past, a picture of "security and **freedom**" where people were able to acquire "a superior knowledge of the Arts and Sciences of Europe". Jambhekar's statement is in fact, fairly representative of the understanding of the early reformers with regard to British rule. It should be remembered that the first generation of reformist thinkers began their intellectual journey in the face of a dual challenge. On the one hand, **there** was the overwhelming presence of colonial rule that did not simply represent to **them** a foreign power but also a modern and 'advanced' society that had made breathtaking advances in the field of ideas – of science and philosophy. To them, it **embodied** the exhilarating developments of science and modern ways of thinking that a country like India – which to most reformers was **essentially** Hindu – had to **also** adopt,

if it was to emerge as a free and powerful country in the modern era. On the other hand, there was the continuous challenge thrown before the emerging indigenous intelligentsia by Christian missionaries who mounted a powerful critique of Hinduism and some of its most inhuman practices like Sati, female infanticide, and caste oppression – particularly the abominable practice of untouchability. Questions of widow re-marriage and the education of women, therefore were major issues of debate and contention. These formidable challenges required two simultaneous intellectual moves: (a) An acknowledgement of the rot that had set in, in Hindu society and a thorough going critique of it. For this purpose, they welcomed modern liberal ideas and philosophy with open arms. (b) As we saw, in the last unit, they were equally anxious to retain a sense of their own Self. Complete self-negation could not make a people great. So, most of the reformers, drawing on contemporary Orientalist scholarship, claimed a great and ancient past. Even a convinced Anglophile like Rammohun Roy, for instance had the occasion to reply to a missionary critic that "the world is indebted to our ancestors for the first dawn of knowledge which sprang up in the East" and that India had nothing to learn from the British "with respect to science, literature and religion." This awe of Western knowledge and achievements and a simultaneous valorisation of a hoary Indian past, were a common features of the reformers of all shades – even though the specific emphasis on different aspects varied from thinker to thinker. For instance, Dayananda was not really influenced, as many others were, by Western thinkers and philosophers. Nevertheless, he too acknowledged the immense progress made by the West. He attributed this progress to the high sense of public duty, energetic temperament and adherence to their own religious principles, rather than to their scientific and philosophical achievements. He therefore drew very different conclusions from his reading of the modernity and progress of the West, which focussed on the regeneration of Hindu society through religious reform.

There are reasons to believe that the early responses to British rule and the so-called Renaissance were a distinctly I-Hindu phenomenon. For various reasons that we cannot go into in this unit, it was within Hindu society that the first critical engagement with colonial modernity began. Other responses from communities like the Muslims, had their own distinct specificities and history and we shall discuss them separately. I-However, we can identify two immediate reasons for this relatively early effervescence within Hindu society. One immediate reason for the Hindu response was of course, the fact that it was precisely certain practices within Hindu society that colonial rule sought to address. A second reason was that, for specific historical reasons, it was the Hindu elite that had an access to English education and exposure to the radical ideas of the Enlightenment. It will be wrong, however, to present what was essentially a response from within Hindu society as an "Indian renaissance".

There was a time when most scholars would consider the Bengal Renaissance in particular, as an analogue of the European Renaissance. More specifically, the "role of Bengal in India's modern awakening" as historian Sushobhan Sarkar argued, was seen as analogous to the role played by Italy in the European Renaissance. Later historians like Sumit Sarkar and Ashok Sen however, reviewed the legacy of the Bengal Renaissance in the 1970s, and came to the conclusion that the portrayal of the intellectual awakening of this period was actually quite flawed. The tendency to see the division between the reformers and their opponents as one between 'progressives' and 'traditionalists' was an oversimplification of the story of the renaissance. They noted the "deeply contradictory" nature of the "break with the past"



inaugurated, for instance by Rammohun Roy, which combined with it, strong elements of a Hindu elitist framework. Sumit Sarkar, in fact, presented a much more modest and complicated picture of the Renaissance than had been drawn by earlier historians and scholars. It makes more sense, therefore, to see these responses as Bhikhu Parekh does, as primarily Hindu responses to the colonial encounter. Parekh has suggested that for these Hindu thinkers, their own self-definition and their attempt to understand what colonial rule was all about, were part of the same exercise: they could not define and make sense of themselves without making sense of colonial rule and vice versa.

- In this context, an intense soul-searching marked the activities of the early intelligentsia. The encounter with colonialism and through it, with ideas of equality and liberty, made them aware of some of the inhuman practices still prevalent in Indian society. It was the section that was able to avail of Western education and steeped therefore in Western values that became the harbinger of reforms. Since you will read about the positions of the different thinkers in greater detail in the later units, here we will not go into the positions of individual thinkers. From the point of view of political and social thought, however, we will identify below some of the broad strands.

### 3.3.2 Modes of Reformist Thought

Bhikhu Parekh has suggested that the arguments of these Hindu reformers relied on one or more of the following four modes of arguments derived from tradition but deployed with a distinct newness to meet the demands of changing times. First, they appealed to scriptures that seemed to them to be more hospitable to their concerns. Vidyasagar for instance relied on the *Parasharasmriti*, while Rammohun Roy invoked the Upanishads. Second, they invoked what they called *sadharandharma*, which they interpreted to mean the universal principles of morality. Third, they appealed to the idea of a *yugadharmā*, or the principles that accord with the needs of the prevailing *yuga* or epoch. Fourthly, they invoked the idea of *loksangraha*, and "argued that the practice in question had such grave consequences that unless eradicated, it would destroy the cohesion and viability of the Hindu social order." As instances, he mentions that Vidyasagar argued that unmarried widows were turning to prostitution or corrupting their families; K.C. Sen contended that child marriages were endangering the survival of the Hindu jati; Dayananda Saraswati believed that image worship was leading to internal sectarian quarrels.

V.R. Mehta has suggested that there are at least two important theoretical issues involved in these intellectual initiatives of the reformers. First, they worked strenuously to change the attitude towards fate and other-worldliness and assert the importance of action in this world. While they continued to assert the importance of the soul and spirituality as a distinctive feature of Hindu/Indian thought, they shifted the emphasis to underline the significance of "enterprise in the service of the community." In that sense, they asserted the significance of secular, this-worldly concerns, in the face of the challenges of the modern world. Secondly, the main focus of their enquiry however, remained not the individual but society, community and humanity as a whole. They do not see society as an aggregate of individuals in pursuit of their self interests but as an organic whole. He suggests that this was so for two reasons. Firstly, there was already a strong tradition in India that emphasised the wholeness or oneness of being. Secondly, the individualist idea society was already under attack in much of the nineteenth century thinking in Europe itself. There is a third feature that he also

mentions in relation to later social reform thought – the concern with the welfare of the people and the attraction that ideas such as 'socialism' and 'equality' held for thinkers like Vivekananda and Bankimchandra.

Mehta also locates three broadly identifiable sources of the elements that went into the constitution of Renaissance thought. The first, the "culture and temper of European Renaissance and the Reformation", and more particularly the ideas of Bentham, Mill, Carlyle and Coleridge through which came a sense of democracy and rule of law and private enterprise. These ideas became available to the indigenous elite through the advent of English education. The second was the influence of the ideas of German philosophers like Schelling, Fichte, and Herder. This is a current however, that influenced the later-day nationalists more than the early reformers – with their sharp emphasis on the ideas of *volk*, community, duty and nation, that were more immediately the concern of nationalists like Bankimchandra, Vivekananda, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh. The third source identified by Mehta is Indian traditional thought. Here the work of great Orientalist scholars like William Jones and Max Mueller, who had brought ancient Indian culture and learning to light, became the basis for a renewed appeal to the greatness of that past. However, as you will see in subsequent units, it was the first and third of these sources that made up the framework of the reformist thinkers. The concern with 'nation' and a rejection of everything British and colonial was strikingly absent among them.

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## 3.4 THE ARRIVAL OF NATIONALISM

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'Nationalism' could be said to have made its appearance in the last part of the nineteenth century. In this phase, the concerns and approach of the thinkers change in a very significant way. Here there is a strong concern with the 'freedom of the nation' and an almost irreconcilable hostility towards colonial rule. Unlike the social reformers before them, they placed no trust on the institutions of the colonial state for effecting any reform. On the contrary, they displayed a positive opposition to what they now considered the 'interference' by the colonial state in the 'internal matters' of the nation. Alongside this, there is a parallel move towards privileging of the political struggle over social reforms.

### 3.4.1 The 'Inner' and 'Outer' Domains

Partha Chatterjee observes that there is a disappearance of the 'women's question', so central to the concerns of the reformers, from the agenda of the nationalists towards the end of the nineteenth century. We may also mention here the fact that practically the first major nationalist mobilisation took place around the Age of Consent Bill of 1891, where the nationalists argued that this was gross interference in the affairs of the nation and that Hindu society would be robbed of its distinctiveness if this were allowed to pass. As you would know, this Bill was meant to prohibit marital intercourse with girls below the age of twelve. You would also know that in the past, most reformers had in fact solicited colonial legal intervention in the prohibition of certain practices, even when these supposedly intervened within the so-called 'private' sphere. It should also be remembered that this was a controversy that spread far beyond the borders of Bengal and lay behind the final parting of ways between Gopal Agarkar and Bal Gangadhar Tilak – the former supporting the cause of social reform and the latter staunchly opposing it. Chatterjee suggests that this disappearance of women's

issues from the agenda of the nationalists had to do with a new framework that had been set in place by then. This framework was characteristic of what Chatterjee calls nationalism's 'moment of departure' and was a fairly elaborate one, where the overriding concern was that of *the nation's sovereignty*. Here, Chatterjee argues that nationalism began by making a distinction between two spheres: the 'material' and the 'spiritual', or what is another name for it, the 'outer' and 'inner' sphere. As you saw above, this was a distinction already made by the reformers and even they would, on occasions, claim that they were spiritually superior to the British, even if the latter had made significant material progress. What the nationalists did then, was to carry over this distinction into the formulation of an entirely novel kind. It conceded that as a colonised nation it was subordinate to the colonisers in the material sphere. But there was one domain that the coloniser had no access to: this was the inner domain of culture and spirituality. Here the nation declared itself sovereign. What did this mean? This meant that henceforth, in this inner domain, it would not allow any intervention by the colonial state. From now on, the questions of social reform would become an 'internal matter' that would be dealt with after the nation attained freedom in the material domain. This did not mean however, that all nationalists were against reforms per se. What it did mean was that these questions would now be dealt with after the power of the state passed into the hands of the nationalists.

There is another aspect of this distinction that Chatterjee does not deal with, but which we can easily see in relation to the question of caste reforms. Soon after the Age of Consent agitation, the nationalists led by Tilak threatened to bum down the **pandal** of the Indian Social Conference that used to be held simultaneously with the sessions of the Indian National Congress and used to be a forum for discussing questions of social reform. This was the period when the so-called 'moderates' were in the leadership of the Congress. The methods of the moderates like Gokhale and Ranade were in the framework of constitutional reform and very much in line with the position of the early reformers. With the arrival of nationalism, all this changed and soon power within the Indian National Congress passed into the hands of the so-called 'extremists', in particular the Lal-Bal-Pal combine (i.e. Lala Lajpat Rai, BalGangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal). Unlike the women's question there was no resolution here with regard to caste reforms; they were simply deferred "in the larger interests of anticolonial unity". All issues of social reform were henceforth to be considered "divisive" of national unity. As it happens, there is one more thing that happened here: with the demarcation of the 'inner' sphere as a sphere of sovereignty, many socially conservative ideas could also now easily inhabit the nationalist movement. It is here that we must locate the strident critique of nationalism that was made not only by leaders and thinkers like Jotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar but also many Muslim leaders who began to see the emergent nationalism as a purely Hindu affair. As nationalism became a mass movement and since most nationalists saw the incipient nation as primarily Hindu, there was an increasing resort in this phase to a revival of Hindu symbols for mobilisation.

However with the entry of Gandhi into the political scene, we can see a shift from this framework to some extent. Although Gandhi himself resorted to the use of Hindu symbols, he was acutely aware of the unfinished agenda of social reform. Here it is interesting however, that while he located himself squarely within the framework of nationalism as defined by his predecessors, and held on to the idea of sovereignty in the inner sphere, he nevertheless made an important departure in terms of his insistence on the question of the

social reform. Unlike other nationalists, he was not prepared to abandon it altogether and would repeatedly insist upon the need of Hindu society to redeem itself by exorcising untouchability from within itself through 'self-purification'. It is also interesting that while he himself used the idea of 'Ram Rajya' as a utopia of nationhood, he made untiring efforts to draw the Muslims into the mainstream of the nationalist struggle.

### 3.4.2 Concerns of the Nationalists

At this stage, it is necessary to point out that it will be wrong to see the divisions between different strands as those between 'progressives' and 'conservatives' or 'modernists' and 'traditionalists'. For, as many scholars have pointed out, even the nationalists who rejected the standpoint of the reformers, were working for a thoroughly modernist agenda. Their valorisation of Hindu tradition was not a valorisation of existing practices of Hindu religion. In fact, they all wanted, much like the reformers, a modern and reorganised Hindu society that would become the centre-piece of the emerging nation. Being 'Hindu' to them was the sign of national identity rather than a religious one. It is for this reason that, as Bhikhu Parekh notes, these thinkers (whom he calls 'critical traditionalists') were largely preoccupied with themes of statecraft, autonomy of political morality, political realism, will power, and courage – issues that were absent from the discourse of the reformers. And these were all entirely modern concerns. This concern with 'Hinduness' as a marker of national, rather than religious identity was very much there not only in the case of Congress nationalists but also of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the author of the ideology of Hindutva. It is not surprising that Savarkar, who stayed away from the Gandhi-dominated Congress movement, was a thorough modernist and atheist who was opposed to all kinds of superstitions and was greatly influenced by the scientific and philosophic achievements of the West. In fact, Savarkar greatly valued the work done by Ambedkar and unlike Gandhi who was suspicious of his motives, he associated him with his Hindu Mahasabha functions. What is even more interesting is that Savarkar's critique of Gandhi was precisely because of Gandhi's wholesale rejection of modern civilisation, science and technology. In a sense, like Nehru the secular-nationalist, Savarkar's complaint with Gandhi related to his 'irrationality' and 'backward-looking' ideas.

This is precisely the conundrum of the nationalist phase that has eluded many scholars and historians. For, it is the proclaimed anti-modernist and *sanatani* Hindu Gandhi who stood steadfastly for Hindu-Muslim unity as the precondition of India's freedom, while the modernist and secular leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Purushottamdas Tandon and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi often seemed to be speaking a language of Hindu nationalism. It was Gandhi who made the Khilafat-Non Cooperation movement collaboration of Hindus and Muslims possible. It is true that Gandhi's insistence on a Hindu *sanatani* identity could not eventually convince either the Muslims or the Dalit/lower caste leaders about his sincerity in safeguarding their interests. In the case of the Dalits, in fact, the problem was far more complex at one level, for what they wanted was an independent political voice within the new nation and that could not be achieved merely by Gandhian self-purification methods.

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## 3.5 THE TRAJECTORY OF MUSLIM THOUGHT

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We have traced the broad contours of nineteenth and twentieth century thought as it emerged from within Hindu society. The history of Muslim society in India is still steeped in a sea of

ignorance and misconceptions and a lot more work needs to be done to unearth the different kinds of trends of thought that emerged from within it. We will sketch a broad outline of this below but let it be stated at the outset that the situation is no less complex and variegated and the common myth of a monolithic Muslim society is as ill-founded as that of any other community. There are a range of responses to the changing world that we encounter here too. A case in point for instance, is the role of the Ulama (i.e. religious scholars) of Farangi Mahal, brought out by the pioneering research of Francis Robinson in the mid 1970s. Robinson noted that this tendency, so active in the second decade of the twentieth century, had been consigned to silence, buried under the narratives of both the Indian and the Pakistani nationalisms. He pointed out the crucial role played by Maulana Abd-al Bari of Farangi Mahal in the pan-Islamic protest, particularly the Khilafat movement and in the foundation of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-I- Hind, which worked, for the most part, in close cooperation with the Indian National Congress and remained opposed to the Muslim League demand for a separate homeland.

With regard to Muslim society in India, we might need to steer clear of two diametrically opposed viewpoints. One, represented by Hindu nationalists, which sees Muslims as an alien body continuously at odds with and insulated from local society and culture, and the other represented by the secular-nationalists who see merely a syncretic culture that expressed the combined elements of Islamic and Hindu culture. We need to see the process by which what was once an elite Perso-Islamic culture of the ashrafs (the gentry or the nobility), gradually enters into a dialogue with the local traditions of learning, of the arts and music etc. This is a process that spans centuries and there are contradictory pulls and trends that are at work throughout. To take just one instance, as Robinson observes, most eighteenth century Sufis believed in the doctrine of *wahdat-al-wujud* (the Unity of Being), which saw all creation as the manifestation of a single Being and thus made it possible for them to search for a common ground with the Hindus. But this teaching of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Spanish mystic Ibn-al-Arabi, was also challenged by the Naqshbandi order which insisted on the more sectarian doctrine of *wahdat-al-shuhud* (or the Unity of Experience) which insisted on the formal teachings of scriptures as they encapsulated God's revelation. This tendency however, remained far less popular for a very long time. However, we cannot dwell on this prehistory of modern Muslim thought in this unit at any length but it should nevertheless be kept in mind as a background.

### 3.5.1 The Specificity of Muslim History and Thought

The advent of British rule meant a more immediate loss of political power for the ruling Muslim elite, especially in North India and Bengal. And this contest with British power continued through the century from the Battle of Plassey (1757) to the Great Revolt – the so-called 'Mutiny' – of 1857, which saw a massive participation of Muslims as a whole and, not merely of the elite. As a consequence, in the immediate period following the institution of the power of the British, the relationship between the erstwhile ruling elite and the colonial rulers came to be marked by deep hostility and antagonism. One of the consequences of this hostility was a certain inwardness that came to define Muslim attitude towards the modern. By and large, they seemed to stay away from English education and ideas and institutions associated with British power. This, as you can see, is in sharp contrast with the attitude of the early Hindu intelligentsia which embraced the new ideas and institutions with considerably

less difficulty. One instance of this complexity can be seen in the instance of Delhi College, established in 1825, which began to impart both Oriental and Western education together in the same institution. In 1827, it began the teaching of English. However, after the revolt of 1857, Western education was discontinued and could only be restarted in 1864. Nonetheless, the fact that such an institution was established indicates a certain openness towards Western knowledge, despite the overall experience of hostility vis-à-vis the British. Mujeeb Ashraf, in fact, claims that Delhi college became one of the models for institutions like Jamia Millia Islamia in the later period. Delhi College produced important nineteenth century reformers and writers like Zakaullah, Muhammad Husain Azad and Nazir Ahmad Nazir.

### 3.5.2 The Reform Initiative

The crucial turning point in this respect, however, is the emergence of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-99) who is known to be the harbinger of liberalism and modernity in Muslim society. He opposed the Great Revolt as he believed that not only had British rule come to stay but also that there was much to be gained by imbibing modern ideas from its contact. It is well known that in order to propagate modern scientific knowledge, he established his Mahomedan Anglo-Oriental College, which in due course, became the Aligarh Muslim University. In 1870, after his return from a trip to England, he began publishing his Urdu journal, *Tahzib-ul-Ikhlaq*, which exhorted Muslims to reform their religious ideas. Sir Syed's basic intellectual move was to argue that Islam was not incompatible with modern ideas and values. For this reason, though he was not a religious scholar by training, his insistence on reform took recourse to a well established method of *ijtihad* that calls for the use of independent reasoning in order to keep up with changing times. Theologically, therefore he took it upon himself to distinguish the essence of Islam from the inessential parts, which he described as 'social customs and practices' that had attached to it and which he argued, had lost relevance in the modern world. Among these, for instance was the Islamic prohibition on charging interest. In doing so, he began to insist on the Quran as the sole legitimate source of Islam. Alongside the Quran, he proclaimed the importance of Reason and Nature, in his attempt to combat the 'overgrowth' of superstition and 'unreasonableness' that was attached to the religion over the centuries. It was a move, you can see, that was clearly parallel to the kind of move made by the Hindu reformers discussed above in relation to their own society. There was undoubtedly a large body of support for his project among the educated Muslims as he managed to raise enough money by contributions for setting up the Aligarh college.

Among the other important figures associated with Syed Ahmad Khan's reform moves were those of Sayyid Mahdi Ali, better known as Muhsin-ul-Mulk and Maulana Shibli Numani. Muhsin-ul-Mulk differed from Syed Ahmad Khan insofar as he sought to win over the Muslim clergy to their side and therefore found it necessary to dialogue with them in terms of Islamic principles. Shibli Numani is considered, along with poets Altaf Husayn Hali and Mohammed Iqbal as one of the key literary figures of modern Muslim society in India. A founder of modern literary criticism in the vernacular language, he also had a reputation as a great poet and historian of Islam. While Shibli supported the efforts of the Aligarh school, he was almost entirely rooted in the vernacular world and the world of Islam. His ambition was to reform Islam from within. According to Ayesha Jalal, he is a more complex figure as he eludes classification either as a 'liberal moderniser' or as an 'anti-modern traditionalist'. Despite his allegiance to the reformist programme he continued to work within the world of

Islamic learning. In later years he took on a different project – that of trying to bridge the gulf between the Aligarh modernisers and the 'traditionalists' represented by the Ulama of Deoband and Farangi Mahal. In his later years he also became a critic of Syed Ahmad Khan, whom he held responsible for stunting the growth of political consciousness among the Muslims. Shibli was among those important voices who remained a strong critic of the Muslim League, which he saw as a forum of upper class, landlord elements of North India, and believed that the interests of the Muslims would be better served by overcoming its 'minority complex' and making common cause with the Congress.

### 3.5.3 The Anti-imperialist Currents

The Aligarh school came under fierce attack from the more theologically inclined Muslims – the learned Ulama. The conflict between the Aligarh school and the Ulama has often been seen as the conflict between the 'modernisers' and the 'traditionalists' but this is in some sense an oversimplification. The Ulama's main problem with Syed Ahmad seems to have been with what they considered his eulogisation of the British – his Angreziyat or Englishness. There was here something parallel to what we witnessed in the case of the nationalists departure from the social reformers, insofar as the Ulama saw his Angreziyat as being too collaborationist. It is interesting therefore that his most strident critics were also those who were more clearly anti-imperialist and sought to ally with the nationalist movement for liberation from the British rule. Among the most scathing of his critics was the Persian scholar Jamaluddin-al-Afghani who was also an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity against the British. Afghani's strident anticolonialism combined with a deeply religious Islamic universalism, says Ayesha Jalal, found a receptive audience among many Muslims put off by Syed Ahmad Khan's loyalty vis-a-vis the British.

Into the twentieth century, other important figures like the poet-philosopher Mohammed Iqbal, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi came to the fore. By the time nationalism emerged as a strong mass force and it was becoming clear that it was increasingly being dominated by Hindu ethos, Muslim politics and thought went through interesting transformations. Mohammed Iqbal was, at one level, one of the great modernisers of Islam, who infused a sense of action and celebration of individual freedom in this world, into the religion. He was supremely concerned with combating the fatalism, contemplation and resignation that is normally associated with pre-modern religions and strove hard to articulate a notion of the Self (*khudi*) that would take its destiny into its own hands. As W.C. Smith put it, to that end he even transformed the notion of a transcendent God into an immanent one – into a God that lives here, in this world, arguing that the will of God is not something that comes from without but surges within the Self, to be absorbed and acted upon. In doing this, he was actually making a sharp critique of Islam as it was practiced by the *mullahs*. While Iqbal imbibed much from European philosophy – especially Nietzsche and Bergson – he was equally contemptuous of those who thought they could become modern by simply aping the West. Here again, much like the Hindu thought we discussed earlier, we can see a clear critique in his thought, of the "materialistic" and "irreligious" nature of Western thought. It is interesting too, that like much of modern Hindu thought, he too sought to extricate science from his overall attack on the West, arguing that while repudiating the latter, the East should adopt the former. It is also interesting that like

all reformers from Syed Ahmad Khan to Ameer Ali, he also took recourse to *ijtihad*. However, he also qualified the recourse to *ijtihad*, by arguing that in times of crisis of Islam, such as was his time, this should be resorted to with circumspection.

It is also important to remember that while being a votary of Islamic universalism and a trenchant critic of the western idea of territorial nationalism, Iqbal was till pretty late in his life a celebrator of a deeper unity of Hindus and Muslims as evidenced in some of his finest poetry. Here we will not go into the complex political process by which Iqbal, inveterate enemy of territorial nationalism finally through his lot with the movement for Pakistan.

The figure of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad represents the more supposedly 'traditionalist' Muslims, who like other believers in Islamic universalism, are often seen as a paradox by most scholars. For, like the other traditionalists like the Ulama of Deoband, he was a strong believer in Islamic universalism, that is, the idea of a worldwide Islamic *ummah*, even while remaining as one of the most steadfast supporters of a composite Indian nationalism. This is a paradox that awaits greater research, which alone will explain why the so-called traditionalist and theologically inclined Muslims found it easier to make common cause with the Hindu-dominated Congress. This stands in sharp contrast to the position of someone like Jinnah who was a liberal and secular politician but eventually became the driving force for the struggle for Pakistan. We shall not deal any further here with the thought of individual thinkers whom you will read about in greater detail in the later units.

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## 3.6 THE REVOLT OF THE LOWER ORDERS

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The important point that needs to be registered here in relation to the work and thought of lower caste leaders like Jotirao Phule, EVR Ramaswamy Naicker – also known as Periyar – and B.R. Ambedkar is that it differed from the trends identified in the case of both Hindu and Muslim thought in two crucial ways. Firstly, at no point did these thinkers give up the social reform agenda and in fact their consistent critique of nationalism remained linked to this question. Secondly, they did not suffer from the deep ambivalence with regard to the West that marked the thought of reformers and nationalists alike in the case of the Hindu thinkers or of Shibli Numani, Muhsin-ul-Mulk and Iqbal in the case of the Muslims. You will read about the respective thoughts of these figures later but for now we will briefly outline some of the reasons for this stark difference.

It is important to note in this context, that to most leaders of the lower castes, particularly the Dalits, the notion of a putative Hindu community simply did not carry any positive significance. To them, the memories of past and continuing humiliation and degradation through practices like untouchability and violent exclusion from society as such, constituted their over-riding experience that framed all their responses. In their perception, therefore, there was something insincere in the efforts of even the reformers who merely wanted the assimilation of lower castes into mainstream Hindu society without disturbing the power structure in anyway.

Phule's main concern therefore, is with an all-out attack on Hinduism and caste – where he sees caste as central to the existence of the former. In fact to most of the radical lower caste thinkers, Hinduism is merely another name for Brahmanism and they prefer to refer



to it by that name. Therefore Phule, like Periyar after him, seeks to unite all the non-Brahmans or *shudra-atishudras* against the power of the Brahmans. It is also necessary to note that in this struggle almost all the radical lower caste leaders give special importance to the question of women's education and emancipation. Phule therefore established the first school for shudra-atishudra girls in 1848, at great risk, for he knew that it would invite the wrath of the upper castes. Later he also established a school for girls of all castes.

In a way, education was the key to Dalit or in the case of Periyar, Non-Brahman liberation, for it was their exclusion from the arena of knowledge that was seen as the main mechanism of their oppression. In the new, modern world, the possibilities had opened out for the lower castes to take their destiny into their own hands. For the first time, their exclusion was significantly broken down, with the arrival of colonialism, which not only opened the doors of education to them, but also opened up secular public spaces where they could move about without fear of upper caste retribution. This being the case, the Dalit and Shudra leaders were less concerned with marking their difference from the 'irreligious' and 'materialistic' West and more directly concerned with breaking down the chains of bondage that had shackled them for centuries. To them colonial rule, if anything, appeared as their biggest benefactor. It is precisely for this reason that they saw the continuation of the social reform agenda as being of critical significance for the emancipation of the Dalits/Shudras. It is not as if they had great faith in the social reform of the upper caste, *bhadralok* reformers of the nineteenth century but the abandoning of even that limited agenda by nationalism was something that Ambedkar had occasion to recall bitterly in his writings and speeches. He especially recalled the role of Tilak and his followers in stopping the sessions of the Social Conference in the late 1890s.

It is significant that even when the focus of Dalit and lower caste thinkers shifted to the explicitly political terrain -- witnessed for instance in the work of Periyar and Ambedkar, their central preoccupations remained with the *structure of power* within the emergent nation: who would wield power within an independent India? What would be the position of the Dalits in the new dispensation? And central to this structure of power was the question of 'social reform' -- not in the vague sense of 'uplift' of the untouchables that Gandhi was seeking to do, without of course disturbing the power of the upper caste elite -- but in the more radical sense given to it by Phule. These thinkers and leaders also realised that if the British were to leave without the question of power being settled, they would be yoked into slavery once again. It is from this fear that the main plank of Ambedkar's and Periyar's political life emerged: the vexed question of 'safeguards' or 'communal proportional representation' as it was also called. The radical lower caste leaders realised that independence would come, sooner or later; thus it was necessary to stake a claim for power by bargaining hard on the question of safeguards, while the British were still here. It is this battle that Ambedkar was forced to partially lose thanks to Gandhi's emotional blackmail -- his notorious fast-unto-death and the eventual Poona Pact.

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### **3.7 SUMMARY**

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We have seen that there are extremely complex layers to what we refer as "modern Indian political thought"; that in fact there is no single body of thought nor a single set of themes that define them. All of them have different histories and arise from different sets of

experiences. Nevertheless, we can identify, at least among the Hindu and Muslim thinkers, a deep engagement with colonial modernity, leading to two distinct trends: (a) a sharp critique of the existing state of Hindu or Muslim society and an effort to rejuvenate it by offering a different reading of tradition and canonical religious texts in most cases. (b) an effort to emulate the West in its scientific and philosophical advances, while at the same time offering a critique of what is seen to be crass materialism and ir-religiosity of its civilisation. We see a deep ambivalence that marks the efforts of reformers and nationalists alike, in this respect. We can also see, how with the coming of nationalism on the political stage, the reform agenda gives way to the political struggle for sovereignty among the Hindus. We have also seen that responses among the Muslims in this phase are much more layered and complex. Finally, we saw the entirely different attitude of the radical leaders of the lower castes – both with regard to colonialism and the West on the one hand and community, nation and religion on the other.

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### **3.8 EXERCISES**

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1. Discuss the phases of modern Indian Thought.
2. Explain the relevance of Social Reform Movement in India
3. Explain the different concerns of Nationalism in India.
4. Discuss various aspects of Muslim Thought in India.
5. Explain the role of the Political Leadership to reform Indian Society led by lower order.

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# UNIT 4 EARLY NATIONALIST RESPONSES: RAMMOHAN ROY, BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE, DAYANAND SARASWATI AND JYOTIBA PHULE

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## Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Early, Nationalist Response
- 4.3 'Thoughts of Rammohan Roy
- 4.4 Bankim's Ideas in Shaping Nationalism
- 4.5 Religio- Political Ideas of Dayanand Saraswati
- 4.6 Jyotiba Phule: A Social Revolutionary
- 4.7 Nationalist Response : A Critical Appraisal
- 4.8 Summary
- 4.9 Exercises

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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There are two different phases of Indian nationalism. The first one continues till the formation of the Indian National Congress 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, viz., 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 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 traveled 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 was later. And, in contrast with the past 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 unit 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, but 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.

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## 4.2 EARLY NATIONALIST RESPONSE

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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 but 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, 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 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 *suttee*, Bankim sought to champion the goal of freedom by drawing upon the German philosophy and 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 the 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-a-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 for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Ram Mohan 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, that provided the basis for redefining India's past glossing largely the phase of Muslim rule in India. Inspired by the message of Bhagvad Gita, the renaissance thinkers supported the philosophy of action in the service of the motherland. What they tried to argue was the idea that successes 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 Buddhist religion clearly shows how realists 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.

The above discussion of sources is very useful in underlining the importance of intellectual threads in shaping the nationalist ideas of the early nationalist thinkers like Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dayananda Saraswati and Jotirao 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.

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### 4.3 THOUGHTS OF RAMMOHAN ROY

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**Rammohan Roy** was a social thinker *par excellence*. His role in doing away with *satee* among the orthodox Brahmins was historical. By founding Brahma 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 make-up 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 liberals, Ray 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 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 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 elite 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.

Rammohan 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 pro-imperial thinker simply because nationalism did not acquire the characteristics of the later period. 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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#### 4.4 BANKIM'S IDEAS IN SHAPING NATIONALISM

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Bankimchandra 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 *Gita*, what Bankim provided was a reinterpretation in the light of Western knowledge to make the *Gita* more suitable reading 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.

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, secondly, 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 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. He admitted 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, and religion and so on, and it would not be possible for them to create conditions for national solidarity unless this 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 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 the 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.

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 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.

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## 4.5 RELIGIO - POLITICAL IDEAS OF DAYANAND SARASWATI

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While Bankim had a clear political message for the nation that lacked solidarity, **Dayananda** (1825-83) who founded the Arya Samaj had concerns similar to those of Rammohan. 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 Rammohan drew upon Upanishads, Bankim upon the Gita, Dayanand while articulating his nationalist response, was inspired by 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. Rammohan 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 the 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. *Secondly*, 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 *The Satyarth Prakush* (Light of Truth) that was published in 1875. First, the idea of God as an active agent of creation appeared to have appealed him 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 Rammohan and Vivekananda 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 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 *The Satyarth Prakash* is actually a comment on the divisive nature of 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'. 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 Vedas'. Hence the first task was to grasp the substance of Vedas where lay the distinctiveness of the Hindus as a race. 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 just and infinite creator. He called for the purging of the degenerate practices of Hindus in the present. He was critical of the present divisive caste system that had distorted the Vedic practices since social hierarchies of 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 its 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 Rammohan, 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 at its infancy. By deciding to stay away from politics, not only did Dayananda fulfill his historical role but also left behind a clearly-articulated nationalist response that drew absolutely on Hindu traditions and especially the *Vedas*.

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## 4.6 JYOTIBA PHULE: A SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARY

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**Jotirao 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 Brahmin priest and their subsequent enlightenment by a Christian missionary. Three important points stand out in this play. First, critical of Brahmin domination, he made a wider point concerning the oppressive nature of Hindu religion that, in its present form, imposed an ideological hegemony on the *shudras* and by suggesting several purifying rituals, it also contributed to material impoverishment of the untouchables. Secondly, by underlining the role of a Christian missionary who rescued the couple from the clutches of the greedy Brahmin, 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 Brahmin scholar, defended arguments in its support. To him, Christianity was not only an escape from Brahminical oppression but also a religion offering salvation. Thirdly, underlying this story, there remained another major ideological point concerning the importance of education in sustaining the Brahminic 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 Brahmins continued to dominate the contemporary social, political and administrative domains. By acquiring the new skills in the changed circumstances of the British rule, the Brahmins therefore sustained their influence by redefining their roles in accordance with the requirements of the day. In other words, by being English literate, the Brahmins 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 Brahminic exploitation. For him, the British rule was a boon in disguise for having struck at the foundation of the caste hegemony of the Brahmins. 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 of the *shudratishudra* (untouchables) in the society in which the Brahmins 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 Brahminical discourse and not Hinduism as such, Phule was perhaps trying to distance from the bandwagon against Hinduism. In his view, Hinduism is rooted in *Shrutis* (Vedas) and the *Smritis* and Brahmins distorted them to rationalise their hegemony. Similarly, the interpretation that the Varna system (the division of society into four different clusters) was god-given and hence unassailable was derived from 'the selfish desire' of the Brahmins to perpetuate their domination on the rest of the society. So, not only did he reject the Hindu system and its theoretical literature altogether but also argued, rather persuasively, against the dichotomous nature of the Hindu society nurturing Brahminic hegemony over the shudras. This was an arrangement in which, he argued further, members of the privileged segment of the society, **viz.**, the Brahmins, 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, quoted 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 Brahminical gods and beliefs sustaining them. In other words, by challenging the Brahminical exposition of Hinduism from the shudras perspective, Phule successfully articulated an alternative discourse of history and its unfolding.

For Phule, literacy and especially English education, was most useful in substantially eradicating the Brahminic 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 the women literacy and an exclusively girls school was established in 1842 at his behest. In this respect, he, like Rammohan, appeared to have appreciated the British rule for having laid the material and institutional foundation of a modern-equalitarian 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 Brahmins over the shudras.

The other distinctive dimension in Phule's response is that he stands out among the early nationalists for having implemented 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. 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 *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 Brahminical practices and values, justified in the name of religion and religious texts.

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## 4.7 NATIONALIST RESPONSE : A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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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 Upanishads or *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 the 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, Rammohan held different views from 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 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. Secondly, 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, Rammohan 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 *Satyasadhok Samaj* in political terms. What was central to him was to challenge the Brahminical hegemony over the *shudras* 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 show-down. 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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## 4.8 SUMMARY

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What runs through the early nationalist response – whether Rammohan, Bankim, Dayananda or Phule – was the concern for massive reform in Hindu society that lost its vitality. Given the fractured nature of Hindu society, it would be difficult, if not impossible, they argued, for the nation to strilce roots, let alone prosper. Drawn on his liberal values of the British variety, Rammohan welcomed the foreign ruie 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 appeased 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 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 Rammohan, Dayananda and Phule. By privileging conceptualisation, a difference-seeking agenda figured prominently and the distinction between 'us' and 'them' was pursued consistently to develop an alternative nationalist discourse.

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## 4.9 EXERCISES

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1. What was the basic argument in the early nationalist response for rejuvenating the moribund Hindu society?
2. How do you account for the difference between Rammohan, Bankim and Phule on the one hand and Dayananda on the other?
3. How was nation conceptualised in the early nationalist response? What are the basic ingredients of a nation according to these thinkers?
4. "A difference-seeking agenda seems to have governed the early nationalists while conceptualising a nation". Elucidate the statement with reference to the writings of Rammohan, Bankim, Dayananda and Phule.

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# UNIT 5 MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS: DADABHAI NAOROJI, MG RANADE AND BG TILAK

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## Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Defining Moderates and Extremists
- 5.3 Moderate Ideology
- 5.4 Extremist Ideology
- 5.5 Moderate – Extremist Comparison
- 5.6 The Importance of Lal-Bal-Pal
- 5.7 The 1907 Surat Split
- 5.8 An Evaluation
- 5.9 Summary
- 5.10 Exercises

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## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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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 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 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 unit 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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## 5.2 DEFINING MODERATES AND EXTREMISTS

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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, 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 'mis-rule' 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'. 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.

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### 5.3 MODERATE IDEOLOGY

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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: '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'. It seems that the Moderates were swayed by British liberalism and were persuaded to believe that in the long run the crown would fulfill 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 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'. Despite his 'loyalist' attitude, Naoroji was perhaps the first Congressman who argued strongly for a political role for the Congress that so far was identified as a non-political platform. While conceptualising the role of the Congress in 'the 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'.

There are two 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 Indian National Congress. According to him 'no Indian 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'. Secondly, 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'. 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'. Thirdly, 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'. Hailing the British rule as 'Divine dispensation', he further appreciated the British government for having introduced Indians to 'the example and teaching of the most gifted and free nation in the world'. 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 domain. 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 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 civilisations 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.

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## 5.4 EXTREMIST IDEOLOGY

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In contrast with the Moderates who pursued a policy of reconciliation and compromise with imperialism, the Extremists demanded time-bound 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 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 in 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 self-reliant economically 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 the exponents of Extremism – BG Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo among others. Unlike the Moderates who insisted on constitutional means to reform the British state, not only did the Extremists dismiss this plea as 'most unfortunate' but 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: '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'. As evident, the friction between the two sections of the Congress reached a pinnacle and a formal division was imminent. Secondly, the uncritical acceptance of Western enlightenment of 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 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 Indian 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. Thirdly, 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 the 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 fulfill 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 the Indians. Although Curzon ostensibly undertook this administrative step for efficiency in administration, 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 nationalist 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'. By releasing those forces in the wake of the partition agitation 'which contributed to the upbuilding of nations', argued Banerji, 'Curzon had made us a nation'.

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 nationalists, 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 appeared to have completely lost their significance.

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## **5.5 MODERATE – EXTREMIST COMPARISON**

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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 the Indians by highlighting their religious schism. For an extremist like Bipin Pal, it was most surprising because 'how can loyalty exist in the face of injustice and misgovernment which we confront everyday'. 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 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. Secondly, 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 fulfill Him'. In appreciation of this attitude, Bipin Pal, a member of the Lal-Bal-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'. **Secondly**, 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'. Urging those associated with the British bureaucracy, Tilak further argued that with the withdrawal of the Indians from the administration, 'the entire machinery will collapse'. Simultaneously with boycott of government offices, the Extremists also propagated for boycott of foreign 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. Thirdly, 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'. 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. Fourthly, 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, also encouraged to terrorise the British administration that was 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, the Extremists were inspired by the **writings** of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee 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 rather 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 Sannyasis 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 failed to arouse. Bankim and Vivekananda were probably the most effective ideologue 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.

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## 5.6 THE IMPORTANCE OF LAL-BAL-PAL

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The Extremist ideology created a leadership trio of Lal-Bal-Pal (Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra 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, Aurangzeb. It would be wrong however to blame as a 'revivalist' since he supported, most enthusiastically, the 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'. 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'. He rose to prominence by organising a successful campaign for boycott of foreign clothes 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 1896-7 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 the 1897, Tilak became a leader of the people who automatically were drawn to him for humanism. 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 Indians themselves that 'rules according to the wishes of the people or their representatives. Similar to the British executive that 'decides on policies, impose and remove taxes and determine the allocation of public expenditure', 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 fulfill their obligation to the ruled and becomes tyrannical, it lacks legitimacy to rule. What is interesting to note 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 multi-religious 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 ten to twelve 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 disregarding completely the importance of beef in Muslim diet. Furthermore, the organisation of national festivals in honour of Shivaji, the Hindu hero of the Marathas 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 India's freedom struggle. So, not only did he articulate the voice of protest in a unique vocabulary, but also he 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.

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## 5.7 THE 1907 SURAT SPLIT

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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. The flashpoint was the 1905 Bengal partition that appeared to have enabled the Extremists to provide a sharp critique of the Moderate strategies that 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 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 the **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 of 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 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, 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 internecine feud among 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 1896-7 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 hitherto remained neglected in the Congress agenda.

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## 5.8 AN EVALUATION

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Of the different phases of Indian nationalism, the Moderate and Extremist phases represented the voice 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 Moderate campaign let loose a process, of which Extremism was also 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 Indian society. Despite sharing more or less 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 Moderate and 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 effort 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.

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## 5.9 SUMMARY

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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 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 the people regardless of religion, caste and clan. In fact, the failure of the Congress in its formative years to address the social contradiction between the Hindus and Muslims led to the growth of the Muslim League in 1906 as the sole champion of the 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, Gandhi easily mobilised 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 a mere platform for annually ventilating grievances against the British as well as settling scores against the fellow congressmen.

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## 5.10 EXERCISES

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1. What are the distinctive features of Moderate and Extremist philosophy?
2. What are the factors that contributed to the growth of Extremists in Indian nationalism?
3. How do you account for the split between the Moderates and Extremists?
4. In what ways, Dadabhai Naoroji was an epitome of Moderate politics?
5. How did Tilak differ from the Moderates? How did he articulate swadeshi, boycott and strike?
6. In what ways, the 1907 Surat split was a watershed in Indian struggle for independence?
7. What are the contributions of the Moderates and Extremists to the Indian struggle for freedom?

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# UNIT 6 HINDUISM : SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND SRI AUROBINDO GHOSH

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## Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Renaissance of Hinduism and the Role of Sri Ramakrishna Mission
- 6.3 Swami Vivekananda's Philosophy of Neo-Vedanta
- 6.4 Swami Vivekananda on Nationalism
  - 6.4.1 Swami Vivekananda on Democracy
  - 6.4.2 Swami Vivekananda on Social Change
- 6.5 Transition of Hinduism: From Vivekananda to Sri Aurobindo
  - 6.5.1 Sri Aurobindo on Renaissance of Hinduism
  - 6.5.2 Sri Aurobindo on Evil Effects of British Rule
- 6.6 Sri Aurobindo's Critique of Political Moderates in India
  - 6.6.1 Sri Aurobindo on the Essence of Politics
  - 6.6.2 Sri Aurobindo on Nationalism
  - 6.6.3 Sri Aurobindo on Passive Resistance
  - 6.6.4 Theory of Passive Resistance
  - 6.6.5 Methods of Passive Resistance
- 6.7 Sri Aurobindo on the Indian Theory of State
  - 6.7.1 Political Ideas of Sri Aurobindo – A Critical Study
- 6.8 Summary
- 6.9 Exercises

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## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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In 19<sup>th</sup> century, India came under the British rule. Due to the spread of modern education and growing public activities, there developed social awakening in India. The religion of Hindus was very harshly criticized by the Christian missionaries and the British historians but at the same time, researches carried out by the Orientalist scholars revealed to the world, the glorious tradition of the Hindu religion. The Hindus responded to this by initiating reforms in their religion and by establishing new public associations to spread their ideas of reform and social development among the people. They wanted to give new birth to Hinduism.

The process of renaissance of Hinduism started with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and it was further developed by the Arya Samaj of Swami Dayanand, the Prarthana Samaj and the Satyashodhak Samaj of Jotiba Phule. Sri Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, played a key role in renaissance and reformation of Hindu society. There was a new



interpretation of Vedanta philosophy and Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh were two major interpreters of Neo-Vedanta philosophy. They were of the opinion that Neo-Vedanta philosophy would increase cultural strength of Hinduism and pave the way for the growth of nationalism in modern India. They interpreted Indian nationalism in the context of reformation and rejuvenation of Hinduism.

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## 6.2 RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM AND THE ROLE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

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RamaKrishna Mission played a key role in the renaissance of Hinduism. It was established by Swami Vivekananda. It was named after his teacher Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Ramakrishna (1836-86) was a son of soil and never lost his rustic simplicity, He was a mystic who preached self-less devotion of God and ultimate absorption in him. He personified the rebirth of **ancient** tradition in the midst of growing westernisation. He preached the people to follow the path of self-less devotion and claimed that service of man was service of God. He asked his disciples to live pure life, free of passions, desires, hatred and pride. He condemned no one and saw good in all. It was his firm belief that the religions of the world were not contradictory but were various phases of one eternal religion.

His disciple Swami Vivekananda established the **Ramakrishna Mission** to serve the people. He wanted to find a new path of progress for Hinduism because he was **not** happy with the **reform** movements as they were imitations of the western methods. He had three alternatives before him. First, to follow the path shown by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and join **Brahmo Samaj**. Secondly, to follow the path of total renunciation and go to Himalayas to **attain** the goal of liberation. Thirdly, to follow the path of **service** to the society and to create social awakening in the minds of the people about resuscitation of the **Indian** society. Vivekananda chose the third path and told the Indians to see Narayana in the form of a poor beggar dying of starvation. Thus, for Vivekananda the Ramakrishna Mission should stand for selfless service of the people, **ceaseless** efforts to find truth and thereby for reawakening of the spirit of India. During Vivekananda's life time and after his death, Sri Ramakrishna Mission played a key role in the renaissance of Hinduism.

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## 6.3 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY OF NEO-VEDANTA

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Vedanta philosophy was one of the most important ancient philosophies of India which believed that God alone was real and the visible world was **unreal** and the absorption of **individual** soul in the one supreme soul was the goal of every human being. That was called liberation and it could be achieved with the help of true **knowledge**. Raja Ram Mohan **Roy** was a supporter of non-dualistic monism. He expounded **the** concept of fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. But Vivekananda **followed** the Vedanta preached by his teacher which was rooted in the traditional Indian wisdom of Bhakti tradition, He did not believe in the path of renunciation and asked people to perform their duties in the spirit of selflessness. There were three important principles of Neo-Vedanta philosophy of Vivekananda. They were as follows:

- Vedanta believed in the oneness between God and man and the solidarity of Universe.
- It did not stand for a life of renunciation but stood for self-less action in the services of humanity. Hence, service of man should be considered as service of God.

It propagated the principle of universal tolerance and believed that different religious faiths were different paths to reach the goal of liberation.

Thus; for Swami Vivekananda, Neo-Vedanta philosophy stood for service, sacrifice and freedom. He did not want the Neo-Vedantists to remain inactive but to work for the awakening of the masses. He wanted young Indians to dedicate themselves in the cause of resurgence of India.

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## 6.4 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON NATIONALISM

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Swami Vivekananda is considered as one of the prophets of the Indian nationalism because he tried to awaken Indian people who were lying in deep slumber. He wanted to see the emergence of a strong and self-confident India which would give the message of the Vedanta to the world. He maintained that the Indians should be proud of their history, culture and religion and should try their level best to reform them – in the light of the demands of time. The awakening of the spirit of India was the goal for young people. Hence, he asked them to "arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

Vivekananda was highly critical of the British rule in India because he held that due to their rule, Indians lost confidence, famines engulfed the land, farmers and artisans were reduced to poverty and penury. The British were exploiting Indians in all the spheres of economic activity. They had let loose the reign of terror and struck fear in the minds of the people. Due to exploitative economic policies of the British government, Indians could not develop their natural resources and their productive potential was sapped. It was imperative that Indians should know the evil effects of the British rule in India.

Vivekananda was of the opinion that the national regeneration of India would begin when people became fearless and started demanding their rights. Also, he asked the Indians to develop solidarity and oneness of the spirit by the eradication of social evils, superstitions and caste-arrogance. He was of the opinion that caste system divided the Indian society into classes and created the feeling of inferiority and superiority among them.

He held that though there was a variety of races, languages, religions and cultures in India, there existed a common ground between Indian people. There was a common religious tradition which could be depended upon to build national spirit. According to Europe, the basis of national unity was political ideas but in Asia, religion formed the basis of it. It was not necessarily a particular religion as such, but all religions would help us develop the national integration. For the Indians, religion was a unifying force as the spirituality was blood in the life of India. All differences melted in it. Indians preserved their faith in the most difficult conditions.

It was the duty of the educated Indians to make its knowledge available to the people in their oneness and solidarity. He exhorted Indians not to get involved in the divisive issues of race and language and imbibe the spirit of unity. He said that Hindus should not blame Muslims

for their numerous invasions because the Muslim conquest came as a salvation to the downtrodden masses in India. One fifth of India did not become Muslim because of sword but because of their egalitarian message. Therefore, national **unity** could not be fostered by caste conflict but it would be secured by raising the lower to the level of higher classes and not by bringing the upper to the lower level. The privileges of classes should cease and it was the duty of every aristocracy to dig its own grave and the sooner it did so the better. The more it delayed, the more it would fester and die a worse death. India should be of one **mind** and of one resolve. Hence, we must revive the whole of India. India must conquer the **world** not with the help of gun, but with the help of spirituality.

For the growth of national spirit in India, independence of mind was necessary. India should expose herself to the outside world but she should not get scared of any one because her **freedom** would come through heroism and bravery. Indians should be proud of their country and declare that all Indians, despite their different castes and religions, are brothers. Thus in Vivekananda's theory of nationalism, there were four important components which were **as** follows:

- There was unity and oneness of the Indian people despite their outward diversity.
- It was necessary to remove caste differences to inculcate the spirit of social solidarity.
- There was similarity in the teachings of **different** religions and India consisted of **all** religious communities.
- National spirit in India could be developed by young people by devoting their life to social service and national awakening.

#### **6.4.1 Swami Vivekananda on Democracy**

Vivekananda was a great advocate of democracy and he wanted to awaken the young people to establish free and democratic government in India. For him, the principle of liberty was important because he held that there could not be growth in society as well as that of **an** individual without liberty. He said that every one should have liberty of thought, discussion, food, marriage and dress. He wanted to democratise the Indian society by abolishing caste privileges, by opposing cunning of priest craft and social tyranny.

Vivekananda was a supporter of equality of all **men** and pleaded for the abolition of caste and class privileges. He thought that the spirit of equality in India could be inculcated through the spread of knowledge and education. Caste system was a hindrance to the development of India into a strong nation. He held that in democracy, power rested with the people. He was of the view that for the democratisation of the country, the western thinkers tried to perfect the political and social order but the **Eastern** thinkers laid more stress on perfection of individual. For, sound social and political institutions **were** ultimately rooted in the goodness of individuals. For him, religious tolerance was crucial for the growth of **democracy** because that alone could promote the cause of liberty, equality and fraternity.

#### **6.4.2 Swami Vivekananda on Social Change**

Vivekananda wanted an overall development of India and the eradication of poverty and

degeneration of the people. He was an opponent of aristocracy and feudalism. He pleaded for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. For that purpose, he wanted to awaken the toiling masses of the country. He was of the view that in future, the Shudras or those who were toiling hard would become the rulers of the country. The socialist and anarchist movements in the Western countries indicated this. Vivekananda developed his own theory of social change to explain this.

Vivekananda's theory of social change was based on the Indian concept of history. It was a theory of political cycle that visualised periodic and circular change in the regimes on the basis of law of change, with the help of historical evidences from the history of Greece, Rome and India. He held that in every individual, there prevailed three qualities of Sattva (Knowledge) Rajas (Valour) and Tamas (ignorance) and in every society and in every civilisation, there existed four classes of the people. All societies which had developed division of labour had four classes of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. According to Swami Vivekananda, on the basis of historical examples and law of nature, each of this class in every society governed the country, one after another in succession.

Vivekananda was of the opinion that in the first stage of human development, in almost all ancient civilisations of the world, the power was in the hands of the Brahmin or a priest. He ruled with the help of magic. His power was overthrown by the Kshatriyas or warriors who formed monarchical or oligarchic governments. But the power of this class was overthrown by the Vaishyas or traders. In most of the modern nations, such as England, the power of controlling society was in the hands of Vaishyas, who amassed wealth by carrying out commerce and trade. They became powerful only in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many a kingly crown had to kiss the ground due to the growing power of commercial classes. Now, the Vaishyas had enormous power in their hands. Therefore, the conquest of India was not the conquest by Christianity but it was a conquest by the commercial classes, whose flag was a factory chimney, whose warriors were merchant men and whose battlefields were the market places of the world. It was the opinion of Vivekananda that the power of the Vaishyas would be overthrown by the Shudras.

According to Vivekananda, as per the law of nature, wherever there was an awakening of new and stronger life, there it tried to conquer and take the place of the old and the decaying. Nature favoured the dying of the unfit and the survival of the fittest. The power of the Kshatriyas was brought down because of its dictatorship. He maintained that the real power of the society rested with the Shudras who produced wealth with the help of their labour power. But they were treated harshly by the ruling classes. But they would gather strength and overthrow the rule of commercial classes. The Shudras would become great not by acquiring the qualities of Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vaishyas, but by retaining their own qualities as producers of wealth. In the Western world, we had seen that the ranks of the Shudras were growing and with the increase in their awakening, they would capture power. The last phase of social change was the victory of Shudras and the capture of political power by them. The rise of Socialist and anarchist movements in Europe substantiated this.

Thus, in the political theory of Vivekananda, the awakening and freedom of India was synchronised with the rise of Shudras and workers and peasants to political power. He was a supporter of nationalism and provided the basis of Neo-Vedanta to it. He used religion and culture in the cause of nationalism.

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## 6.5 TRANSITION OF HINDUISM: FROM VIVEKANANDA TO SRI AUROBINDO

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In the social and political ideas of Swami Vivekananda, we had seen the rise of Hinduism and Indian nationalism. New Hinduism **became** the tool of national consciousness in India. But this consciousness was broad enough to include Muslim, **Parsee**, Christian and other minorities in India. In the political ideas of Vivekananda, we could see the rudimentary elements of nationalism. But with the growth of national consciousness, Bengal produced another great nationalist thinker in whose political ideas we could see the development and growth of Indian nationalism. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism **became** more aggressive and anti-colonial. Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was instrumental in giving radical content to nationalism in India.

The Political career of Aurobindo Ghosh began in the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century as he spent 13 years of his life in England to get the best English education. **He** returned to India and studied history and philosophy. In the process, he became one of the authentic exponents of Hinduism and Hindu philosophy. He joined the extremist group in the Congress and took a leading role in the anti partition movement in Bengal. During this **period**, he mobilised **people** through speeches and writings. He was a leading member of the radical group in the Congress party. The British government tried to suppress the Swadeshi movement. **Tilak** and Aurobindo were arrested, **Lala Lajpat Rai** was deported and **many** were put behind **the** bars, Along with Aurobindo, his **revolutionary** brother Barinder was arrested on the charges of sedition. In the trial, **Aurobindo** was acquitted but Barinder was sent to gallows. In the jail, he had certain spiritual and mystical experiences and as a result, he decided to leave politics and concentrate on the life of philosophy and Yoga. In a brief political career, **Aurobindo** carried forward the process of the renaissance of Hinduism on the basis of Vedanta and deepened the concept of spiritual nationalism.

Sri Aurobindo's political ideas could be divided into two phases. In the first phase, he expounded the concept of Indian nationalism and developed the theory of passive resistance. In the second phase, as a great sage of India, he wrote extensively on the ideal of **human** unity and the essential characteristics of Indian model of state building. **Thus**, in the first phase, he was a militant nationalist eager to liberate his motherland from the bondage. In the second phase, he was a great sage who sought to give message **to the world** in the ideals of the human unity and nationalism to achieve the goal.

### 6.5.1 Sri Aurobindo on Renaissance of Hinduism

As we have seen, Sri Aurobindo was a prominent figure in the renaissance of Hinduism and he wanted to complete the task left incomplete by Swami Vivekananda and **Bankimchandra Chatterjee**. Aurobindo carried forward the development of **Neo-Vedanta** and declared that the true message of Vedanta was selfless action or Karma **Yoga**. In the theory of Karma Yoga, a person was enjoined to perform his duties without aspiring for the fruits thereof, The **Geeta** taught us to fight against injustice because life is a series of **struggles**.

Aurobindo was of the **opinion** that there was a need of the renaissance of Hinduism which called for the awakening of the Indian soul which was in deep **slumber**. It could achieve its:

glory through the philosophy of Vedanta which gave more importance to spirituality than to science. The West glorified science but science is a light within a limited room and not the sun that which illumines the world. The spirit of every human heart had to be awakened to revive the glory of Hinduism. Hinduism should change the rags of the past so that its beauty might be restored. It must alter its bodily appearance so that her soul might be newly expressed. According to Sri Aurobindo, the goal of new Hinduism was to pave the way for emergence of Indian nationalism and to harmonise the world and the spirit. He held that the genius of the Hindu was not for pure action but for thought and aspiration realised in action.

### **6.5.2 Sri Aurobindo on Evil Effects of British Rule**

Aurobindo was a harsh critic of the British rule in India. He did not agree with the opinion of the moderates that it was a divine dispensation. He said that it was a curse for the majority of the Indian people because the foreign rule in India sapped moral and mental energies of the Indian people. The British rule ruined the economy of India and did not allow the latter to develop as an independent nation. It disorganised the Indians into a crowd, with no centre of strength or means of resistance. Her industries and trade were ruined and agriculture devastated. The British government in India was the worst type of bureaucratic despotism motivated by plunder and domination. India was held in subjection for the benefit of the British ruling classes. The British claim of a good government was false and a good and efficient government was no substitute for self-government and freedom.

It was the contention of Aurobindo that the spirit of India could be freed only by securing complete independence of the country. Freedom from foreign rule was an inalienable right of the people. The evil effects of the British rule could be eradicated only by overthrowing it. Its continuance would further worsen the situation in India.

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## **6.6 SRI AUROBINDO'S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL MODERATES IN INDIA**

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When Aurobindo Ghosh entered Indian politics, it was dominated by the moderate leaders who were of the view that British rule in India was a divine dispensation. Aurobindo was highly critical of their approach to politics. Hence, he wrote a series of articles in the 'Indu Prakash' of Pune under the title 'New Lamps for Old' and severely criticised the politics of petitions and prayers of the moderate leaders. He said that the Congress leaders had very narrow and limited ideals. The Congress was selfishly frigid of social development and awakening of the masses and organically infirm. It was unaware of deeper facts; therefore, it did not articulate the popular opinion of the entire Indian people. It lacked the spirit of sincerity, whole heartedness, right type of methods and right type of leaders because when the blind led the blind both were bound to fall in a ditch,

Aurobindo argued that during Ram Mohan Roy's period, politics of prayers and petition was the only possible policy, but it was wrong to continue it even in the later years. He pleaded for the adoption of new and strong methods. He wrote that the ideas that governed the country were purely western; hence, they could not seize the attention of the people. The Indians should realise that both the liberals and the conservatives were supporters of the continuance of the British rule in India; therefore, the Congress should not expect much from

John Morley – the liberal leader – because he was an ardent supporter of imperialism.

He called for a complete change in the policy of the Congress party because under the moderate leadership, the Congress confused sufferance with freedom and favour of foreign despotism with the right of citizenship. If the Congress did not understand it, it would remain unfit for freedom and the standing hindrance to the country's freedom. He pleaded for the adoption of new policies and programmes to replace the politics of supplication carried out by the moderates.

### 6.6.1 Sri Aurobindo on the Essence of Politics

After the partition of Bengal, there was a tremendous upheaval in the country and a large number of the people joined the Swadeshi movement led by the radical group of the Congress party. Aurobindo joined Tilak, Bipinchandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai to popularise the programme of the party. He was a philosopher of new party. He wanted the Congress to be with people, speak in their language, identify itself with the wishes and aspirations of the people and Indianise the movement in the true sense of the term.

Aurobindo said that **Swaraj**, Swadeshi, national education and boycott were four methods of the new party. For him, 'Swaraj' meant complete independence because he argued that a political agitation was not launched to secure a few seats in bureaucracy and in assembly but to secure right of self-government to the people. Swadeshi meant using the products that were manufactured in our country only and national education stood for imparting education to Indians that suited to their temperament, needs and culture. Boycott meant not using the products manufactured in England. All these four methods were necessary to train the people in national spirit and to be architects of liberty. Thus, for Aurobindo, new politics stood for self-development and self-help. He hoped that it would inculcate the spirit of nationalism in people.

### 6.6.2 Sri Aurobindo on Nationalism

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh was considered as a prophet of the Indian nationalism. Along with Bankimchandra, Tilak and Dayanand, he developed the theory of nationalism in India. Through their self-less work, the forces of nationalism were released.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of nationalism was based on Vedanta philosophy which saw unity and oneness in man and God. There was an essential unity in India despite the existence of the outward differences because the spirit of unity and oneness pervaded it. For her rejuvenation, India needed 'Shakti' or the power that was physical, moral, material and spiritual. The power or strength of a nation depended on the unity of her nation. Taking a clue from Bankimchandra, he declared that India was **infact** Mother **India** which represented united power and Shakti of millions of her children. Mother India represented infinite energy of her people: He identified **Mother** India with God and maintained that it was God's divine mission to set India free. Also, it was divine work to serve 300 million **Indian** people. There was a deep divine purpose in India's freedom because India's freedom movement represented time spirit that **would** liberate resurgent Asia and all the subject people in the world.

Aurobindo was critical of those people who claimed that due to cultural, racial and linguistic

diversity and divisions in the Indian society, India could never become a nation. He pointed out that if we carefully studied the history of Europe and England of the last two centuries, we would realise that their condition was no way different from India. But now England and many other countries of Europe had emerged as nations. India would also succeed to form as a nation because it was a law of history. He held that without political freedom, true advancement of the country was not possible. He was of the opinion that education played a key role in the development of national consciousness in the country,

Aurobindo pointed out that there were certain essential elements in the formation of nationality. These essential elements were geographical unity, common past, a powerful common interest impelling towards unity and certain favourable political conditions which enabled the impulse to realise itself in an organised government. Its goal was to establish a single and united existence. According to Sri Aurobindo, a common enthusiasm coalescing with a common interest was the most powerful promoter of nationality. He pointed out that there existed the necessary conditions for the growth of nationalism in India because Indians had been slowly realising the importance of national unity and offering united resistance to foreign rule.

Aurobindo recognised the importance of villages in the Indian life and pointed out that unlike in the West, where the city was the Centre of all political action, in India village was the backbone of national persistence. Indian villages were democratic, autonomous and self-governing. Therefore, regeneration of the village was important for the regeneration of India. He said that village should retain its autonomy and self-government but at the same time, 'should seek to promote national cohesion. Hence, he held that the days of independent village had gone and must not be revived. National unity could only be achieved when the rural population was developed into a mighty, single and compact democratic nationality. The ideal of national Swaraj must be modelled on the old village community which was self-sufficient, autonomous and self-governing.

Aurobindo's concept of nationalism was based on the philosophy of Vedanta which stood for unity between God and man. He used Hindu religious ideas and symbols. He realised that the ideal of Indian nationalism was largely Hindu in character but he pointed out that this nationalism was wide enough to include the Muslim, his culture and traditions. He said that the Hindu should win Swaraj for himself as well as for the Muslim. A large part of his theory of nationalism was based on awakening the dormant spirit of nationalism that was latent in the soul of India. The struggle against the foreign rule would enable it to achieve self-realisation.

### **6.6.3 Sri Aurobindo on Passive Resistance**

The new party of the radicals wanted to use new methods against the government to secure political rights for the Indian people. Aurobindo thought that the method of passive resistance, which was used by the Irish nationalists, would be ideal for India. Hence, he developed theory of passive resistance in a series of articles published in the weekly called 'Bande Mataram'.

### **6.6.4 Theory of Passive Resistance**

According to Sri Aurobindo, for a subject country, the attainment of political independence



was its highest goal. But there were different means to attain that goal. In India, for Indian patriots, three alternative means were available to win Swaraj and they were as follows.

I) the method of prayers and petitions.

II) the method of armed revolt.

III) the method of self-development and passive resistance.

In the Indian context, Sri Aurobindo pointed out that the adoption of method of prayers and petitions was out of question because its futility was proved. Again, in the Indian context, the method of armed revolt or resistance was not possible or desirable. Hence, Indians had no alternative but to take recourse to self-development which was expressed in the methods of Swadeshi and boycott. Pursuit of both the methods strengthened the cause of self-help. The programme of self help and self-development would be opposed by bureaucracy and government because it challenged their authority. In such a situation, the people should adopt passive resistance to the government. Passive resistance meant the resistance to authority of the government in an organised manner and through peaceful means. The use of arms was not allowed in passive resistance.

According to Sri Aurobindo, in India, attainment of political freedom was the goal of passive resistance. Freedom in India was necessary to stop the drain of wealth and to carry out social reforms. The programme of Swadeshi, national education, boycott and establishment of arbitration courts was the programme of self-development. But this programme, on its own, would not be in a position to secure political freedom for India. Political freedom could only be secured by organised passive resistance carried out on a large scale. This policy was followed by Parnell in Ireland. Its **main** object was to paralyse the functioning of the government by withdrawing support and co-operation to the government.

### **6.6.5 Methods of Passive Resistance**

The essence of passive resistance was to challenge the authority of the state by following non-violent means because under the present circumstances armed conflict or a violent aggressive resistance in the form of sabotage, assassinations and terrorism was not possible and desirable. He said that "ultimately our methods depended upon the type of opposition we met and the type of response they gave to our **agitation**." Those who were agitating for noble cause should be ready for sufferings and sacrifices because passive resistance required more universal endurance. One of the **major** benefits of passive resistance was that through this method, we would be in a position to involve people and let them learn methods of struggle and sufferings. It would train the Indians in heroic actions and boost their morale. It would bring pressure on the government to keep the promises it **had** made to people.

According to Aurobindo, passive resistance worked on two levels. At the first level, it encouraged the people to pursue the methods of self-development **such** as Swadeshi, and national education and at the second level, it sought to exert pressure on the government to concede the demands of **the** people. According to him, in the passive resistance, the following ineasures would be undertaken to achieve success:

- Refusal to assist the government.

- Refusal to pay taxes to the government.
- Boycotting the products manufactured in the foreign countries.
- Boycotting the government schools, colleges and law courts.
- Starting our own schools, colleges and arbitration courts to train people in the method of self help and national independence.

Sri Aurobindo was of the opinion that to pursue the policy of passive resistance effectively, we should develop a well-knit political organisation, linking province to province and district to district. This organisation would represent the national will of the people.

Though the method of passive resistance was as legal as the method of prayers and petitions, keeping the struggle within the bounds of law was not its pre-condition. Occasionally, the passive resistance had to break the unjust and oppressive laws which required a high degree of truthfulness and courage. Because, if the movement succeeded in getting the support of the people, the repression by the government would increase. The main purpose of passive resistance was to make law unworkable by a general and organised disobedience. It was his opinion that conflict was the heart of passive resistance and it brooked no meek submission to authority. Passive resistance method could be changed if the situation so demanded. He held that the norms of general ethics should not be applied to him because he was a Kshatriya and a fighter and not a saint. Aurobindo pointed out that if the government did not consider the legitimate demands of the people, the people would go underground and take recourse to sabotage and terrorism. Terrorism might perish of inanition; coercion was its food.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of passive resistance was influenced by the Irish home rule movement against the British rule. It is to be noted that Aurobindo's ideas on resistance could be considered as precursor to the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha. He was of the opinion that with the development of passive resistance movement, the aspirations of the people would grow and they would acquire the capacity to actualise national self-consciousness and national will in their day to day activities.

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## **6.7 SRI AUROBINDO ON THE INDIAN THEORY OF STATE**

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Sri Aurobindo renounced active politics in 1910 and left for Pondicherry to pursue his spiritual goals. All attempts to bring him back to national politics did not succeed. In the second phase of his life, Aurobindo emerged as a great sage and a philosopher and received worldwide respect. He became the authentic representative of Indian wisdom. He wrote in 1947, a book explaining the spirit and form of the Indian polity.

According to Aurobindo, ancient Indian thinkers developed an Indian model of state building which was democratic in character in the sense that it allowed communal freedom and self-government and autonomy to the village and the community. It was a synthesis of communal autonomies of village, town, caste, guild and family. The state was a means of holding together and synthesised free and living organic systems and autonomies into free and living organisms. Indians successfully struck the right balance between stability and change. It was

an organic totality of social existence. Ancient Indian system had a capacity to renew itself. According to Aurobindo, the Indians did not want to establish a mechanical state that laid exaggerated dependence on legislation, administration and force. The Western idea of state was artificial and the state in the West was imposed upon the people. The Indian system was flexible and was built up from within. The Western state was based on a rigid uniformity but in the Indian system, new elements were harmonised without destroying the original elements and existing institutions. It was a creation of practical reason and the common experience of communal self-government.

Aurobindo was of the opinion that a rich and creative thought was necessary to create a transmitting medium between the spirit and the external world. The Indians did not develop creative thought, hence, they had lost independence. He said that Indians should not imitate the West and reproduce the ideals and forms of West because it was not creative. Instead of blindly following the West, they should recover their ancient creative power and in the light of principle of Dharma, retrieve the spirit and form of Indian polity.

### **6.7.1 Political Ideas of Sri Aurobindo – A Critical Study**

Sri Aurobindo can be considered as one of the greatest political thinkers in modern India. He added almost a religious fervour to nationalism by identifying mother India with 'Shakti' or power of the Indian people. He defined the essence of religious nationalism in a manner which, for its sheer passion, had never been surpassed. He came to idealise his native land and faith and identified one with other. The fervour of his faith in 'India' helped his countrymen to transcend the differences of caste, language, custom which had hindered the development among them. Secondly, his ideas on passive resistance broke new grounds in the sense that in his theory, he had visualised most of Gandhian ideas and programmes though he had differed with him on the issue of primacy of truth and non-violence. Thirdly, in his theory of state, he sought to represent the authentic Indian tradition to the world and claimed that the Indian theory of state building was superior to the Western theory of state building.

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## **6.8 SUMMARY**

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In this unit, we have studied the political ideas of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, who were considered as the two great figures in the renaissance of Hinduism in modern-times. Both the thinkers identified renaissance of Hinduism with the emergence of nationalism in India and held that rejuvenation of Hinduism in the spirit of Vedanta philosophy was a precondition for it. Hence, they gave new interpretation of the Vedanta which declared that the service of man was service of God. Vivekananda's concern for the plight of the downtrodden sections was complimentary to it. Both Aurobindo and Vivekananda were of the opinion that religion and culture played a key role in the making of nationalism as they added rare fervour and passion to it. One of the notable features of their nationalism was that it was not based on the exclusion of any community and included all religious communities. Thus, their nationalism was all inclusive. They inspired thousands of young men in undertaking the patriotic causes. Swami Vivekananda's concept of social change and Sri Aurobindo's theory of passive resistance can be considered as significant contributions to the modern Indian political thought.

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## 6.9 EXERCISES

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1. Discuss Sri Aurobindo's theory of Nationalism.
2. Describe in brief the methods of passive resistance advocated by Aurobindo.
3. Discuss the salient features of Aurobindo's theory of state.
4. Discuss briefly the main features of renaissance of Hinduism.
5. Write a short note on the Neo-Vedanta philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.
6. Discuss briefly Swami Vivekananda's views on nationalism.
7. Briefly state the salient features of Swami Vivekananda's theory of social change.
8. What were Sri Aurobindo's views on the renaissance of Hinduism?
9. What were the evil effects of the British rule, according to Aurobindo?

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# UNIT 7 HINDUTVA: V. D. SAVARKAR AND M. S. GOLWALKAR

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## Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Background of the Rise of Hindu Nationalist Ideology
  - 7.2.1 Political Career of V D Savarkar
  - 7.2.2 Savarkar's Views on Social Change
- 7.3 V D Savarkar on Social Reforms
- 7.4 Hindu Nationalism of V D Savarkar
  - 7.4.1 Hindutva as Cultural Nationalism
  - 7.4.2 Hindu Nation and Indian State
  - 7.4.3 Hindu Nationalism of V D Savarkar – A Critical Study
  - 7.4.4 Growth of Hindutva and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS)
- 7.5 Hindu Nationalism of M S Golwalkar
  - 7.5.1 Nation as Motherland
  - 7.5.2 Territorial Nationalism Rejected
  - 7.5.3 Hindu Nationalism and Minorities
- 7.6 Golwalkar on Social Organisation
- 7.7 Political Ideas of M S Golwalkar
  - 7.7.1 Three World Views of Change
  - 7.7.2 Negative and Positive Hindutva
  - 7.7.3 Hindu Nationalism of M S Golwalkar – A Critical Study
- 7.8 Summary
- 7.9 Exercises

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## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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The ideology of 'Hindutva' was essentially the ideology of Hindu nationalism. The first prominent exponent of Hindu nationalist ideology was Mr. V. D. Savarkar. He wrote a book called 'Hindutva' in 1924 to explain the basic principles of Hindu nationalism. In 1925, the R.S.S. or the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh was formed to protect the Hindus from the Muslim 'aggression'. The R.S.S. was established by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar. In the subsequent period, Savarkar and the R.S.S. propagated the Hindu nationalist ideology against the ideology of the composite Indian nationalism expounded by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. Mr. M. S. Golwalkar, who succeeded Hedgewar expounded the Hindu nationalist ideology of the R.S.S.

The basic difference between Hinduism and Hindutva is that Hinduism stands for Hindu religion, but Hindutva is a political ideology that wants to establish Hindu nation in India. Hinduism does not have any political agenda, but Hindutva has a specific political agenda.

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## **7.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RISE OF HINDU NATIONALIST IDEOLOGY**

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After the failure of Non-cooperation movement, there was growth of communal and separatist ideas both among Hindus and Muslims. Both of them claimed that their ideology was not a communal ideology but it was a true nationalist ideology which took into consideration the culture and religion of the people. After 1922-23, the followers of Lokmanya Tilak started supporting the Hindutva movement. Along with them the newly educated Hindu middle class also supported it. The Mopala revolt in Kerala created a lot of unrest in the Hindu community.

The main arguments of the Hindutva supporters were as follows:

- i) In the past, the Hindus suffered many a defeat and lost their independence to the foreign invaders because of lack of unity. They had numbers, valour and resources at their command but they faced defeat due to lack of unity.
- ii) The Hindus had been losing their numbers due to the aggressive proselitisation by the Christian missionaries and the Muslims. As a result, in a long time they would be reduced to a minority in their land of birth. Hence, in order to maintain the level of Hindu population, the Shuddhi and Samghatana movements should be launched. Shuddhi stands for reconversion of Hindus.
- iii) There was a need to protect the political interests of Hindus because the British government was hostile to them; the Muslims aggressively pursued their separatist agenda and the Congress under the false notion of secularism was betraying the cause of Hindus.

In India, we could see the emergence of two traditions of Hindutva, the first tradition was led by V. D. Savarkar and the second tradition was led by M. S. Golwalkar. Though both the traditions professed their allegiance to the ideology of Hindutva, their emphasis and methods differed.

### **7.2.1 Political Career of V. D. Savarkar**

V. D. Savarkar (1883-1966) was a charismatic leader, who played a significant role in the freedom struggle of India. For his revolutionary activities he was sent to Andamans in 1911 and was brought back to India in 1922. Subsequently, he was kept confined to Ratnagiri town from 1923-1937. During this period, he suffered great hardships and made countless sacrifices in the cause of freedom of the country. There were two phases in the ideological development of Savarkar. In the first phase of his life, he was influenced by the philosophy of the Italian nationalist Joseph Mazzini and supported the concept of the composite Indian nationalism, which was not different from the nationalism of Aurobindo and Tilak. During this period, religion played an important role in his concept of nationalism, but it did not exclude any religious community from it. But in the second phase of his career after 1922-23, Savarkar became the supporter of Hindu nationalism. After his release from the confinement in 1937, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha and became its President from 1938 to 1945.

## 7.2.2 Savarkar's Views on Social Change

V. D. Savarkar was a product of renaissance in the Western India and in his early days he was influenced by the philosophy of Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, a rationalist philosopher. Agarkar was deeply influenced by the ideas of Herbert Spencer, J. Bentham and J.S.Mill. Savarkar was not a religious man and throughout his life, he eschewed all religious practices. From the European philosophical tradition, he borrowed three important ideas:

- i) 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.
- ii) Violence was in-built in the creation of nature and the 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.
- iii) 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.

Savarkar was a supporter of positivist epistemology and accepted the direct evidence of the senses as the only valid source of knowledge. He rejected the sanctity of religious scriptures and maintained that all religious scriptures were man-made and their teaching could not be applied to all societies in all times. He rejected otherworldly philosophy of Shankara and Ramanuja and discounted otherworldly pursuits of man. He held that to secure the progress of the country, to acquire more power and strength and to live good and prosperous life, we must pursue these worldly goals. For that purpose, we must use science and technology. He favoured the pursuit of science and reason and criticised 'irrational and superstitious practices of Hindus.

Thus, in Savarkar's theory of social change, the principle of life struggle played an important role. For him, reason, science and technology were important to bring about the change in the society.

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## 7.3 V. D. SAVARKAR ON SOCIAL REFORMS

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Savarkar was a great supporter of social reforms and he exhorted the Hindus to accept modern practices based on science and reason and reject the religious superstitions and customs which were standing hindrance to the social progress. All the religious scriptures were man-made and they were subject to scrutiny of reason. Due to blind faith in the scriptural authority, the Hindus became superstitious, fatalist and credulous. This weakened their desire to know more. They neglected science and technology.

**Savarkar** was a critic of caste system. He held that both 'Chaturvarna' and caste system proved very disastrous for the unity of Hindu society. The 'Chaturvarna' was based not on

any scientific criterion, but was a creation of scriptures and age old beliefs. It gave birth to inhuman practice of untouchability. The caste encouraged and institutionalised inequality, divided Hindu society into numerous compartments and sowed the seeds of hostility and hatred among the Hindus. Historically, Hindus constantly faced defeats at the hands of invaders because of the caste system. The untouchability was a distortion and it was wrong to consider any human being as untouchable. It militated against the spirit of human brotherhood. Hindus had developed several shackles that had been keeping them in chains which were based on the principles of purity and impurity. Hindus enslaved women due to these wrong customs.

Savarkar wanted the Hindus to reject blind faith in the Vedas and customs and tried to acquire material strength. They should accept the supremacy of machines and technology and break all bonds of blind faith and customs. It was incumbent upon Hindus to weed out all the defects in their society so that they could emerge as a strong nation in the world.

For Savarkar, social reforms, rationalism and science were needed for the development of a Hindu society which would enable it to acquire the necessary strength. He said that in modern times, nation was accepted as a viable unit for human beings. In the international politics, conflict and competition was raging between different nations of the world. In the international politics, language of strength was understood. Hence, Hindus should acquire strength through the pursuit of science and technology, so that they could protect their national interest as well as self-interest.

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## **7.4 HINDU NATIONALISM OF V. D. SAVARKAR**

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Savarkar was the first systematic exponent of the Hindu nationalism. He elaborately described his theory of Hindutva in his book 'Hindutva' published in 1924. By that time, he had abandoned his concept of Indian nationalism that he borrowed from Joseph Mazzini in favour of Hindu nationalism. In the process of developing his concept of Hindu nationalism, he rejected some of the arguments of territorial nationalism. He held that the existence of a mere territory did not make nation but nation was made by the people who constituted themselves as a political community, bound together by cultural affinities and traditions.

### **7.4.1 Hindutva as Cultural Nationalism**

Savarkar was a supporter of cultural nationalism. He was of the opinion that identity formation was the essence of nationalism. India had received such identity from the Hindu religion. This identity was evolved over a long period of time. Despite having outward differences, the Hindus were internally bound together by cultural, religious, social, linguistic and historical affinities. These affinities were developed through the process of assimilation and association of countless centuries. It moulded the Hindus into a homogeneous and organic nation and above all induced a will to a common national life. This homogeneity was important because other sections in the society had divergent cultural traditions.

Savarkar argued that it was cultural, racial and religious unity that counted more in the formation of the nation. While defining nation, Savarkar wrote that nation meant a political community which had occupied a contiguous and adequate territory and developed independent



national identity. This community was internally organised and was bound together by cultural and racial affinities. He held that the Hindus had become nation because they possessed all these characteristics.

Savarkar was of the opinion that Hindus constituted nation because they had developed close affinities with the land bound by Himalayas to the Indian Ocean and the Indus River. Hindus considered India as their fatherland and holy land. Savarkar tried to show that those people constituted nation who considered India as fatherland and holy land. In this definition, Savarkar effectively excluded those people who did not consider India as their holy land – because their sacred religious places were not situated in India. For him, Hindu nationalism stood for the unity of all Hindus. For him, Hindu society and not Hindu religion came first; Hindus were a nation because they were a self-enclosed community which was internally organised on the basis of racial, religious and linguistic affinities. The Hindus shared a common historical past. Savarkar knew that ultimately, nationalism was a psychological feeling and it was necessary to cultivate national consciousness among the Hindus. The common affinities should be used to strengthen the national consciousness. He wanted Hindus to cultivate the affinities that encouraged national consciousness and undermine the tendencies that divided the Hindu society.

#### 7.4.2 Hindu Nation and Indian State

Savarkar wanted the Hindu nation to be strong and powerful so that India could survive as an independent strong nation in the ferocious life struggle that was going on between different countries of the world. He held that in the modern times, nation had been recognised as the only viable political entity and all the societies of the world had been organised on the basis of nation. Hence, everybody had to think about his national policies in the context of nation only. There was nothing parochial or sectarian about it.

For Savarkar, Hindus as a community, formed nation. Hence, he laid stress on the principle of exclusion. He excluded Muslims and Christians from the Indian nation because they did not consider India as a holy land because their sacred religious places were situated outside India. Hence, he laid emphasis on the difference between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, he wrote that everything that was common among us weakened our resolve to oppose them; Hindus were constantly fighting against Non-Hindus to save their community. Hence, he launched the Shuddhi movement to reconvert the converted Hindus to Hinduism and to purge Marathi language of Arabic and Persian words. The Muslims were not assimilated in India, in fact, they tried to absorb Hinduism but they failed in their efforts. The prolonged resistance of the Hindus to Muslim invasions moulded them into a strong and resolute nation. \*

What were the rights and positions of minorities in such a Hindu nation? Savarkar held that nation was a cultural category but state was a political category. All Hindus were the members of the nation. Non-Hindus might not become members of the nation but they were members of the Indian state. He maintained that Hindus did not advance any claims, privileges and rights over and above non-Hindu sections. He wrote, "Let Indian state be purely Indian, and let there be no distinction as far as franchise, public services, offices and taxation on the ground of religion was concerned. Let all citizens of the Indian state be treated equally according to their individual worth irrespective of their racial and religious percentage in the general population." He was ready to concede all rights to the minorities but did not think

it necessary to concede the demands of special interests advanced by Muslims.

Thus, Savarkar made a distinction between the Indian state and Hindu nation and considered the Hindu nation as a part of the Indian state.

### **7.4.3 Hindu Nationalism of V. D. Savarkar – A Critical Study**

Savarkar was the first Indian thinker who declared that Hindus formed separate nation in, India. He stood for a strong Hindu nation which would withstand and survive ferocious life struggle among the nations. He sought to popularise the Hindu nationalism throughout his life with the help of the Hindu Mahasabha.

There are obvious tensions and logical inconsistencies in the Hindu nationalism of V. D. Savarkar. He could not properly define the concept of nationalism because Hindus, Muslims and Christians shared common traditions and affinities in India even in the religious field. His advocacy of reason, science and technology was instrumental in the sense that for him they were useful because they helped him forge strong Hindu nation. Reason and science in the West were the culmination of the development of social philosophy which fought against religious prejudices and superstitions. The same could not be used to strengthen the cause of religious nationalism. From that point of view, the use of the word 'reason' was deplorable because rationally speaking the whole of communities could not be excluded from the definition of the nation on the grounds of loyalty and patriotism because the betrayers of the national interest could come from any community. Also, his distinction between the nation and the state was not convincing because both of them (nation and state) could not be separated and they came together as nation state. He conceded all the citizenship rights to non-Hindus except the membership of the nation. This would definitely create distinctions among the people and destroy national unity. A large section of the society would feel that they were excluded from the national mainstream for no fault of theirs. Savarkar's advocacy of the relativist ethics did not resolve these tensions because reason, science and relativist ethics did not recognise ascriptive loyalties. They had to be applied to all human beings across the board.

#### **7.4.4. The Growth of Hindutva and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS)**

The second school of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism was expounded by the leaders of the RSS. The RSS was established by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925 to protect the interests of the Hindus. Dr. Hedgewar was a follower of Lokmanya Tilak and in his young days, he had contacts with some armed revolutionaries of Calcutta. Hedgewar was close to Dr. B. S. Munje. In 1920-21, Dr. Hedgewar took part in the non-cooperation movement. After the suspension of the movement, the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims got deteriorated. Hedgewar thought that due to the disorganised nature of Hindu society, the Hindus were suffering losses in the communal riots. Hence, he decided to establish a strong organisation of the Hindus to protect their interests.

In 1925, he established the RSS. It was a cultural organisation in the sense that it did not directly participate in politics. Dr. Hedgewar set three objectives before the RSS and they were as follows:

- 1) Mobilisation of the Hindus to protect their interests and to bring about unity and coherence in all their activities.
- 2) Opposition to British militant and communal Muslim politics and the Congress which had been following the policy of appeasement of Muslims.
- 3) Increasing the influence of the R.S.S. in all walks of life by patiently undertaking organisational work and by inculcating the spirit of patriotism. According to Dr. Hedgewar, the basic purpose of the RSS was not to capture political power but to increase the influence of Hindus in the public life of the country.

During Dr. Hedgewar's time, the R.S.S. became popular among the white collar middle classes. It did not take part in the civil disobedience movement of 1930 and did not directly get involved in the political activities of the Hindu Mahasabha. In 1940, Dr. Hedgewar nominated a young university Professor Mr. Madhav Golwalkar as the chief of the R.S.S. The RSS did not join the tumultuous Quit India Movement of 1942. Golwalkar continued to occupy the position of the chief of the RSS upto 1973. It was M. S. Golwalkar who expounded the RSS' concept of Hindu nationalism. His was an impressive personality. He had studied ancient Indian philosophical texts. Throughout his life – Guruji-as he was called, was a great teacher and commanded unique respect and following. His enunciation of the Hindu nationalism became popular among the youth.

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## **7.5 HINDU NATIONALISM OF M. S. GOLWALKAR**

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The Hindu nationalism of M. S. Golwalkar was different from that of V. D. Savarkar in the sense that Golwalkar's theory of nationalism was based on Indian spiritualism. Savarkar was a modernist and he did not oppose westernisation. But Golwalkar was a supporter of Hindu culture and opposed the Western way of life. He held that the Indian spiritualism was superior to the Western materialism. He believed that India was a holy land and it was the divine will that India should lead the world.

### **7.5.1 Nation as Motherland**

Golwalkar was an exponent of cultural nationalism and he identified nationalism with love for our motherland. He held that the Hindus considered India as their motherland because, since thousands of years they had been identified with this holy land. In this holy land only, Hindus registered all their great achievements. Hindus were children of this ancient land as they were nurtured by water flowing from her rivers and food produced by her rich soil. It was wrong to believe that India became a nation in the recent past. In fact, she had been existing as a nation since thousands of years. There might be some outward differences, but there existed basic unity in India. All Hindus were bound together by same religion, same language and same culture. The Great Sage Sankara realised this principle and established his religious centres at four different corners of India. He held that all Hindus were permeated by the spirit of unity and solidarity.

While discussing different elements of Hindu nationality, Golwalkar pointed out that existence of contiguous territory was the first element of nationality. The second element of nationality was the characteristics of the people who inhabited that territory. The people should consider

this land as a holy land and motherland. They should be united by common culture, common traditions, and common historical past and common ideals. This **commonality** brought them together and helped them evolve their own way of life. Third element of nationality was common economic interests of the people living in that particular territory. All these **elements** contributed in making the national character of our country. Thus, in Hindu nationalism of M. S. Golwalkar cultural factors played a very important role. Thus he laid emphasis on developing the right type of attitude in the minds of the people by giving them proper training and education. He was of the opinion that the Hindu method of imparting right type of values and practices to the people was useful. It is only through this that the Hindu **nation** could evolve into national organism pulsating with the spirit of unity and oneness.

### **7.5.2 Territorial Nationalism Rejected**

We have seen in our previous discussion that M. S. Golwalkar was a supporter of the cultural nationalism and he defined his nationalism in the light of cultural traditions of the Hindus. He rejected the concept of territorial nationalism as humbug. He held that an assortment of people having **different** cultures and languages could not become nation simply because they resided in a particular territory. This group of divergent people could not be called nation because it could not function as a coherent whole. It was not permeated by the living spirit of unity and oneness. It lacked the life, blood and the living **spring** of culture. According Golwalkar, it was the cultural affinity and common historical traditions that bound the people together and made them of one mind and one body.

Golwalkar was of the opinion that territorial nationalism was lifeless, unscientific and unnatural. If we accepted the principle of territorial nationalism, then the country would get converted into 'Dharmashala'. Anybody could become a member of one nation. But this theory of nationalism was wrong because a nation was normally formed of the people who had developed common cultural affinities and who considered India as their motherland. He was of the opinion that the concept of territorial nationalism was responsible for the partition of the country and disunity in the country. It had sapped our national energy and destroyed the life spring of **nationalism** that nourished the national spirit of the Indian people. Territorial nationalism was unnatural and unscientific because Muslims did not consider themselves as a part of the nation. He maintained that it was this **divisive** and anti-national agenda that resulted in the partition of the country. The Partition of India was a standing example of the failure of the concept of territorial nationalism. As against this, **Golwalkar's** cultural **nationalism** was based on five principles: common religion, common race, common language, **common** culture and **country**. These five principles generated the national consciousness in the minds of the people and **made** them of one mind and of one resolve.

### **7.5.3 Hindu Nationalism and Minorities**

Golwalkar rejected the concept of the Indian or territorial nationalism as reality. He claimed that due to certain historical and cultural factors, Hindus in India constituted a **nation** and they considered India as their motherland. But as far as **other** religious communities in India were concerned, they did not consider India as their motherland or holy land. They took pride in the fact that they were heirs of the invaders of India. **They** were invaders who waged **wars** against Hindus to keep them in subjection. They had developed extra territorial loyalties. Though most of the converted Muslims and Christians were originally Hindus, because of

their conversion, they lost their devotion and affection for motherland. They started claiming the foreign racial genealogies as their own. Therefore, Golwalkar was of the opinion that these minorities could not be considered as a part of the Hindu nation.

Golwalkar was of the opinion that the non-Hindu minorities could also become a part of the Indian nation, if they abandoned their separatist tendencies and accepted all the traditions as their own. He exhorted the Muslims and the Christians to join the mainstream and be a part of the Hindu national tradition. He held that these communities should Indianise themselves by accepting and imbibing the Hindu cultural and historical traditions. They should consider themselves as inheritors of the great Hindu heroes described in the epics and take part in the celebration of Hindu festivals. They should imbibe the Hindu way of life. He pointed out that it was not necessary for them to leave their religion. They should practice their religion as they wanted because they had freedom of religion and worship. Also, by accepting the Hindu way of life, they could remain Muslims and Christians. It was high time that they should return back to home and be a part of the great national tradition. Golwalkar said that he did not want to do this with the help of coercion or force, but through love and persuasion. He held that the minorities would enjoy all social and political rights but they would not be given any privileges.

Arguing further, Golwalkar pointed out that since long, Hindus had developed unique method of assimilation and absorption which enabled the foreign elements that entered into society to get integrated into Indian society without losing their identity. The best example of this assimilation was that of Parsis who came to India from Iran to escape the religious persecution and became a part of the great Indian tradition without losing their religion and identity.

Golwalkar was highly critical of the so called progressive and secular Hindus for encouraging the process of identity formation among the minorities and backward castes. They justified these divisive tendencies on the grounds of secularism and democracy. Instead of promoting the process of integration in different parts of Hindu community, they were encouraging the divisive tendencies to grow. He was of the opinion that these westernised and denationalised Hindus would not be able to forge unity of the Indian nation on the grounds of pluralism and secularism. These processes were developed as a reaction and thus they would not be in a position to develop a positive content in their activities.

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## **7.6 GOLWALKAR ON SOCIAL ORGANISATION**

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M. S. Golwalkar was a supporter of Hindu way of life and looking from that perspective, he found that most of the criticisms levelled against the ancient Indian Varna system were baseless. It was his contention that the present caste system was a degenerated form of the Varna system, and the practice of untouchability was inhuman and wrong. It was wrong to blame India's caste system for the defeats the Indians suffered at the hands of foreign invaders.

It was his contention that originally, the Varna system was based on the functional specialisation. Chaturvarna was considered to be the form of God as the four Varnas constituted his limbs. All Varnas were considered equal and the system was based on mutual help and mutual assistance. All the varnas contributed equally to the growth and prosperity of the society.

Varna and caste system were not responsible for the defeat of the Hindus. Historically speaking, Hindus were the only people in the world who fought bravely and incessantly against the Muslims and saved their religion in the most trying circumstances. The only areas which succumbed to Islam were parts of Punjab and Bengal and North West province. One of the major reasons for that collapse was the existence of a weak caste system in these areas.

Golwalkar was of the opinion that in the Varna system, due to functional specialisation, the people could perfect their skills as a family tradition, avoided competition between the people which was a bane of present capitalist system and ensured sources of livelihood for each and every member of the family. Hence, it was a scheme of employment insurance without the state intervention. Satisfaction of the individual self-discipline and elasticity were the characteristics of the Varna system. Though occasionally, Golwalkar attributed the lack of unity among the Hindus to caste distinctions, he did not undertake any programme to reform caste system. His justification of the Varna system was a part of the ideological tradition that was developed in modern India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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## **7.7 POLITICAL IDEAS OF M. S. GOLWALKAR**

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Galwalkar was of the view that the Indian perspective of nationalism and politics was essentially spiritual, hence, Indians stood for peace and non-violence. But in the changed conditions, Hindus should acquire strength of arms including atom bombs to safeguard their national interests. Hindus faced defeats in the past because they did not acquire latest weapons and militarily they did not prepare themselves well. He agreed with Savarkar that there was a struggle for dominance among different countries of the world; therefore, India should try to become a strong nation. He argued that non-violence was the method of cowards and the strength was necessary to protect the good and to eradicate the evil in the world. Therefore, the Vedas say that 'Veer bhogya Vasundhara' -the 'earth is enjoyed by the brave.

### **7.7:1 Three World Views of Change**

Golwalkar maintained that capitalism, communism and Hindu spiritualism were three world views of change. He was of the opinion that the Hindu perspective of change was superior to the other two perspectives.

While criticising capitalism, Golwalkar pointed out that capitalism was based on greed and exploitation. In the name of equality of opportunity and individual freedom, the more powerful and intelligent among the people had exploited the weaker and poorer sections of society and established their own monopoly over people. The rights of individuals became useless and right to vote was exploited by the capitalist classes to win political power. The capitalist system caused untold miseries to the working classes and it reduced millions of people to poverty and penury.

The second system of change was that of Communist system which emerged as a reaction to the capitalist system. It offered materialist interpretation of history. But the materialist interpretation of Marx proved wrong because his prediction of inevitability of revolution did

not materialise. The Communists captured political power in the name of working classes and promised them that they would be given freedom, peace and prosperity. But instead of fulfilling these promises, they imposed a worst type of dictatorship on the people. They had not been in a position to solve the basic problems of bread and shelter both in Russia and China. Both the systems failed to solve the basic problems of the people because they were the fruits of the same seed and shared many things in common. Their attitude was materialistic because they tried to measure pleasure in satisfying basic physical needs and wants of the body.

According to Golwalkar, the Hindu spiritualism was the third perspective of change which was superior to both capitalism and communism. Hindus did not approve of the materialistic perspective of life and thought that the satisfaction of material needs and physical wants was not the goal of life. Hindus believed that human life was homogeneous which was permeated by the supreme spirit. A man lived not to maximise his pleasures and powers but to help and assist others. Hindus did not see duality of relations between man and man but saw harmony, mutual help and accord in their relations. Every human being was a part of society and their mutual interests were not contradictory. The ultimate goal of life, according to the Hindu perspective was the establishment of a society where there would not be any punishment, or any punisher, and people would protect each other by the principles of Dharma, which is the highest stage of society.

According to Golwalkar, the Western models of social organisation and change failed because they laid more stress on the system than on the individual. **Infact**, Individual was the **basis** of the society and hence, development of the individual was the goal of Hindu social life.

## 7.7.2 Negative and Positive Hindutva

According to Golwalkar, there prevailed two types of Hindutva in India. The first type of Hindutva was called negative **Hindutva** and the second type of Hindutva was called positive Hindutva. The negative Hindutva was developed as a reaction to **the** Muslim communalism or the Congress secularism. The negative Hindutva was **basec** on hatred. It constantly thought negatively about others and vice versa. Therefore, we should not develop our social system in contrast to the Muslims and the British, because there would not be any positive content in it. Those leaders who followed negative Hindutva remained firm supporters of Hindutva, but because of their fierce opposition to Muslims in their minds culturally they became Muslims. The work of organisation and development of Hindus had nothing to do with Muslims because it was not undertaken to oppose Muslims as such. He said that negative Hindutva was a means to capture political power.

Golwalkar was of the opinion that his Hindutva was positive Hindutva **in** the sense that it was not developed as a reaction to any adversary. It was his contention that the essence of positive Hindutva was the organisation of Hindus as a social force in the society, which would continue to remain steadfast and resolute in the most trying circumstances. **The** seizure of political power was not the objective of positive Hindutva because it believed that all our problems could not be solved with the help of political power. There were many historical evidences in the past that showed that great empires established with the help of political power were destroyed by the savage invaders. For example, the Roman Empire was reduced to dust by the Huns. They were destroyed because they were raised on the weak

foundation of political power. But the Hindus never thought that the acquisition of political power was the ultimate goal of life. The secret of resilience of Hindu community could be found in their attitude towards life. They built their social and political organisations not on the basis of force but on the basis of Dharma. The King was not as respected as the great sages who were the experts in Dharma. The national regeneration of Hindus was not brought about by great Kings but by great sages, like Sankaracharya, Chaitanya and Nanak. In modern times, the same role was played by Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Dayanand and Ramteertha. Golwalkar maintained that the great goals in life were not achieved with the help of political power; history had shown that great religions such as Islam and Christianity got corrupted because of political power. The lust for political power destroyed great religious movements; the Communist experiment of establishing the socialist society in Russia with the help of political power had failed. If the state decided to undertake the task of rejuvenation of cultural values and social organisations, it had not achieved success but in the process, it corrupted other cultures and societies as well.

Golwalkar argued that it was the goal of positive Hindutva to remain outside the seat of political power but control it from outside so that it would work in the interest of the society. The greatness of a nation lies not in political power but outside it. Therefore, he pleaded for developing a strong and well organised society which could work as bedrock. He had compared the society to the sun which gave light, energy and strength to the different organs of society. The goal of the RSS was to develop individual as well as society so that it could become strong, united and powerful. The vision of Golwalkar was a political vision and it was based on the programme of an organised and conscious effort to change the social, cultural and political life of the society. Though he rejected political power, the state power as sovereignty and national strength were crucial to his vision of a Hindu nation.

### **7.7.3 Hindu Nationalism of M. S. Golwalkar – A Critical Study**

Along with Savarkar, Golwalkar can be considered as a philosopher of Hindutva. Golwalkar sought to develop his Hindutva on the basis of the Indian spiritualism or non-dualistic monism of Sankaracharya. But there were some tensions in his position because in the "Vedanta", there was unity between the individual soul and the supreme soul. This unity pervaded all human beings including the Hindus and Muslims. The Indian spiritualism did not make distinction between Hindu and non-Hindu souls. Secondly, he tried to reject the concept of territorial nationalism but his own concept of cultural nationalism was based on territoriality of motherland! His concept of cultural nationalism also faced some problems because his exclusion of Muslims and Christian communities from nation on the grounds of extra-territorial loyalties was questionable. We can give several examples to prove that both Hindu and Muslim communities had produced traitors to nation. The entire community cannot be blamed for the betrayal of a few. Golwalkar's concept of positive Hindutva, which did not pursue political power, was not convincing because he was a supporter of strong natives and strong nation state. The RSS was not disinterested in political power; perhaps he wanted the RSS to remain outside political power while organisations of the Sangha Parivar could pursue it. The RSS would stand above political power but control it from without. Therefore, Golwalkar's critique of political power was interesting but difficult to fit into his overall orientation of the militant nationalism.

There were basic differences in the political ideas of Savarkar and Golwalkar. Savarkar's



agenda was a modernist agenda and he wanted to establish modern Hindu society in India. He was opposed to both Varna and caste system. He was worshipper of political power and for him state power was crucial in the protection of the country. Golwalkar was opposed to the process of Westernisation and he was of the opinion that negative Hindutva would not be in a position to solve our basic problems. He did not want to abandon the basic principles of the Hindu civilisation; therefore, he supported Varna and caste system. The basic contradiction in Golwalkar's political ideas was that he wanted to develop a very strong nation state in India, but at the same time, he wanted to stay away from political power! Both the ideas could not go together.

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## 7.8 SUMMARY

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In this unit, the Hindu nationalist ideas of V. D. Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar have been studied. Both of them gave new political interpretation of the renaissance Hinduism. In the Hindu nationalism of V. D. Savarkar, it was argued that those people who considered India as their fatherland and holy land were members of the Hindu nation and those people whose holy land was outside of India were excluded from Hindu nation. In order to strengthen the Hindu nation, Savarkar advocated total social reforms and abolition of the caste system. He supported a modernist agenda of social change which relied on the use of science, rationalism and technology. He made distinction between the nation and the state.

M. S. Golwalkar's Hindu nationalism was based on the spiritualism and he was of the opinion that the Hindu community in India constituted nation because it considered India as its motherland. Common religion, race, language, culture and history were instrumental in creating a nationality and due to their consolidation into a national community on these lines, Hindus had become nation. In order to be a part of this national community, the minorities should Indianise themselves, accept the traditions and cultures of the country as their own, and get integrated into a national community. He also discussed the essential characteristics of the negative Hindutva and positive Hindutva. He held that the RSS stood for positive Hindutva which would lay stress upon internally strengthening the social organisation of the Hindus. The negative Hindutva was a means to secure political power. But he was of the opinion that political power was an inadequate means to achieve social progress.

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## 7.9 EXERCISES

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1. Describe briefly causes of emergence of politics of Hindutva in India.
2. Write a short note on Savarkar's theory of social change.
3. What, according to Savarkar, is the role of social reforms in strengthening the Hindu nation?
4. Discuss the main features of Hindu nationalism of V. D. Savarkar.
5. Bring out Savarkar's views on nation and state.
6. Examine briefly Golwalkar's ideas on Hindu nationalism.

7. Why does Golwalkar support the Hindu social organisation? Give reasons.
8. Write a short note on the rise of the RSS in Indian politics.
9. Briefly examine Golwalkar's ideas on Hindu nationalism.
10. What advice did Golwalkar give to the religious minorities in India?
11. Discuss Golwalkar's views on positive Hindutva.

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# UNIT 8 MUSLIM THOUGHT: SIR SYED AHMED KHAN, MOHAMMED IQBAL, MAULANA MAUDOODI AND MOHAMMED ALI JINNAH

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## Structure

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898)
  - 8.2.1 Contribution to Modern Education
  - 8.2.2 Hindu Muslim Unity
- 8.3 Mohammed Iqbal (1876-1938)
  - 8.3.1 Early Life
  - 8.3.2 Ideas on Nationalism
  - 8.3.3 Political Activities
- 8.4 Maulana Maudoodi (1903-1979)
  - 8.4.1 Views on Nationalism
- 8.5 Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948)
  - 8.5.1 Hindu-Muslim Unity
  - 8.5.2 Jinnah and the Muslim League
  - 8.5.3 Two Nation Theory
- 8.6 Summary
- 8.7 Exercises

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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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The Muslim thought in modern India can be understood properly only in its larger historical setting. It is important to note that the evolution of the Muslim political thought was a complex phenomenon involving historical context of the Muslims' social, cultural and political life and interactive process with the colonial rule which had been established in India particularly in the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857. Several issues had emerged, such as relative backwardness of Muslims in relation to modern tendencies which had come in the wake of the establishment of the colonial rule. The question of accommodation of various social groups including Muslims in the existing and future power structures became an important issue which was widely debated among all groups. Equally important was the issue of religious-cultural identity of various communities which went through a process of redefinition in the late nineteenth century as well as the first half of the twentieth century. All these issues emerged over the years with varying responses from different social groups which, in the long run, affected inter-community relations. These developments also affected the political processes which were unfolding in the course of an articulation of anti-colonial nationalist ideology.

While all these issues were matter of concern for all, it is important to recognise that the response of the Muslims to all these issues was not uniform but varied since the Muslims did not constitute a monolithic community. The Muslims were divided on lines of language, region and class as any other religious community. When a community is vertically as well as horizontally divided, the response to any issue would most certainly be as divided. It is vitally important to recognise that thoughts of several leaders, that we shall be shortly discussing, can only be seen in their evolutionary perspectives since they were not fixed in a timeframe and were constantly evolving. In the course of evolution of the thoughts of the person under discussion we shall discover that in certain respects there is a continuity while in others there is a contradiction. The contradiction and continuity may be seen as the running thread in the thoughts of all those under discussion. It is up to the readers to discern the meaning of those thoughts in historical time.

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## 8.2 SIR SYED AHMAD KHAN (1817-1898)

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Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was one of the most formidable figures of the late nineteenth century India. He emerged on the Indian scene as one of the great reformers, educationist and moderniser within the Muslim community. He was born on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1817 in one of the respected families associated with the Mughal court. Sir Syed was a direct witness to the declining fortunes of the Mughals and was conscious about the fact that while the glory of the Mughals was as good as gone, the political force which was gaining ground was that of the British. In any case, the British East India Company had already gained tremendous power in the eastern part of India in the second half of the eighteenth century. Gradually it had been spreading its influence in other parts of India as well. The British had started knocking on the doors of Delhi under the Mughals and by 1803 they had succeeded in confining the Mughal rulers within the precincts of the *Qila-i-Mualla* (The Red Fort). It was a part of the growing experience of Syed Ahmad Khan to have seen that the Mughals were surviving on the suffrage of the British since 1803. It is not surprising therefore that Syed Ahmad Khan took a minor post with the British at the age of twenty one years despite some opposition in the family. Subsequently he passed the examination of the Munsif and was appointed at Mainpuri. In 1842 he was transferred to Fatehpur Sikri and in 1846 re-posted at Delhi and stayed here for about nine years. During his stay at Delhi he engaged himself in academic pursuits and apart from other things, he produced an important work *Asar-us-Sanadeed*, a monumental work on the monuments of Delhi which was widely acclaimed. Later in 1855 he was given promotion and appointed as *Sadr Amin* at Bijnor. While Sir Syed was posted here at Bijnor, the Revolt of 1857 broke out which had shaken the British. Here at Bijnor, Sir Syed had played an active role in saving the lives of several British officers. In this Revolt Sir Syed's family too suffered loss of some family members and was able to take his mother and aunt to safety in Merrut with great difficulty.

Sir Syed, having seen the Revolt and subsequently its brutal suppression by the British, was convinced that the British were too powerful and any attempt to resist them might not be fruitful at all. From this time onwards, the British started suspecting the Muslims at large as they were violently opposed to them (British). As a consequence of such an approach, the Muslims were treated more harshly than any other social group involved in the Revolt. The prospects looked bleak as regards the collective lives of the Muslims in India, and Sir Syed took it upon himself to bring about reconciliation between the Muslims and the British. In the

immediate aftermath of the Revolt, Sir Syed wrote several pamphlets (Booklets) on various issues concerning the Revolt. The first was, *Tarikh-i-Sarkashiye* Bijnor, with a narrative of the developments as regards the Revolt. However more important was his *Asbab-i-Baghawat-i-Hind* published in 1858, in which he tried to explain various underlying causes of the Revolt. However, his central argument was that the Revolt came about because the British were entirely unaware of the Indian opinion since Indians were deliberately kept out of the governance of their country. He argued, as if addressing the government of the day, that, "It is from voice of the people that the government can learn whether its projects are likely to be well received. This security can never be acquired unless the people are allowed a share in the consultation of government." It is difficult to establish any co-relation but the fact remains that within a short time, Indians were to be incorporated in the Governor-General's Council as per the provisions of the Indian Council Act of 1861.

After having convinced the British that it would serve their interests to take Indian opinion too in the governance of India, he wrote another pamphlet, *The Loyal Mohammedans of India* in 1860, in which he argued that it was not true that all the Muslims were the enemy of the British as enumerated, that there were several Muslims who had stood by the British during the tumultuous days of the Revolt. From this time onwards, Sir Syed devoted his entire life to bring about reconciliation between the British and the Muslims. However it was clear to him that his attempts at reconciliation would not bear fruits unless the Muslims' attitude towards many modern institutions such as modern education including science etc, undergo some transformation.

### 8.2.1 Contribution to Modern Education

Sir Syed was, by now, convinced that in order to stem the declining fortunes of the Muslims, it was important that they took to modern education as it was introduced by the British. With this purpose in mind, he founded the Scientific Society in 1863 at Ghazipur, in Uttar Pradesh. The basic objective was to translate scientific literature, into Urdu. In this project, he was supported by all including several Hindu friends, The subjects such as mechanics, electricity, pneumatics and natural philosophy received particular emphasis. Subsequently, this society was shifted to Aligarh. In 1866, Sir Syed started a journal on behalf of the Society called the Indian Institute Gazette. During 1869-70, he travelled to England and was able to observe the British educational institutions and was impressed by them. Upon his return from this extended journey he developed an idea that in order to improve educational standards of the Muslims of India, there must be modern educational institutions for them. This was the larger objective in mind with which he founded Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College in 1875/ 1877. It was proposed that here, while modern education would be imparted to the Muslims, they would also have some training in the preservation of their cultural heritage. It is interesting to note that while MAO College was founded for Muslims, its doors were open to all. Many graduates in the early years of this college were Hindus. He also wanted the Indian Muslims to bring about reforms in their society with the help of a magazine called *Tahzib-ul Akhlaq*, in which he ridiculed many practices which were out of tune with modern trends of the time. For all his efforts to reconcile the Muslims with the British, modern education, his advocacy for fresh interpretation of the *Quran* and keeping the door of the MAO College open to all, he was fiercely attacked by the conservative Muslims. He remained undaunted in his endeavour.

## 8.2.2 Hindu-Muslim Unity

Sir Syed was also a champion of the Hindu-Muslim unity. He had once described the Hindus and Muslims as two beautiful eyes of a beautiful bride. He wrote two essays in *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq*, one in 1888 and another 1898 exhorting Muslims to give up killing of cows since this would bring about a good neighbourly relations between the Hindus and the Muslims. There were innumerable occasions when he strongly advocated for this unity between the two important religious communities.

While these were some aspects of the various thoughts of Sir Syed where he was committed to larger well being of the Muslims, there were certain other aspects as well where he seemed to suggest distinct political options for the Muslims and did not wish them ever to come closer to the Congress. Some of these tendencies were visible from the time the movement to replace Urdu in Persian script with that of Hindi in Nagari script had emerged in the United Provinces in 1867. The protagonist of this movement had argued that Urdu was not the language of the masses as Hindi was, and thus, such a demand was raised. Sir Syed was disturbed by such a development since he was himself given to use Urdu extensively in producing all kinds of literature and treatises. This sudden development on the language and script question led him to argue that, "Now I am convinced that these two nations will not work unitedly in any cause. At present there is no hostility between them. But, on account of the so called educated people it will increase a hundred fold in the future." Later, in a letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> April 1870 to Nawab Mohsinul Mulk he wrote, "This is proposal which will make Hindu-Muslim unity impossible to achieve. Muslims will never agree to Hindi and if the Hindus, in accordance with their latest attitude, insist on I-Hindi, they will reject Urdu. The inevitable consequence of such a move will be that the two will be permanently separated."

In the political realm too, Sir Syed did not have any conception of bringing religious communities together for certain political action. On the contrary he maintained that these communities would have distinct political options separate from each other. This was the driving force which made him argue that the Indian National Congress was not in the best interest of the community of Muslims. He thought the Congress was likely to take a confrontationist stance in due course of time, which would be injurious to the interest of the Muslims since they had already suffered as a consequence of the Revolt of 1857. He further thought that a mere passing of resolutions by the Congress did not make it national in character. In general he argued with Muslims that they should keep away from the Congress. Sir Syed was also opposed to the principle of election even for the local boards and district boards. He argued that keeping in view the kinds of social differences that existed in the Indian society, it would be imprudent to introduce the principle of elections. He suffered from a strange fear that, in the event of elections, various religious communities would vote for leaders of the respective communities which would result in the political marginalisation of the Muslims. Instead he favoured the principle of nomination, which would ensure certain representation of Muslims too. In making these arguments, Sir Syed betrayed certain elite bias. He himself was nominated to the Imperial Legislative Council in 1878.

It is another matter altogether that there were not many among Muslims who paid heed to his exhortations. For instance, Badruddin Tayabji refuted Sir Syed's argument and said that Muslims' interest would be better served by advancing the general progress of India. There were scores of Muslim delegates participating in the proceedings of the Indian National

Congress since 1887 and many of them came from the same province 'as Sir Syed's. The Ulema of Darul Uloom at Deoband were issuing Fatwas exhorting Muslims to join the Congress.

It is important to remember that in a country such as India where diversity of all hues existed for such a long time, religious communities were no exception. Every community threw up diverse options keeping in mind the class, linguistic, regional and other backgrounds in mind. After all Sir Syed was not preaching any hatred between communities. However his major concerns were to promote the interests of the Muslims at large particularly the established groups. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan died on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1898.

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## 8.3 MOHAMMAD IQBAL (1876-1938)

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Mohammad Iqbal is commonly referred to as Allama Iqbal for the reason that he was considered as one of the important intellectuals among the Muslims in the first half of the twentieth century. Even though he is widely known for his Urdu and Persian poetry, he was a practitioner of the politics as well. Between his poetry and politics, he was able to blend elements of philosophy as well, in which he had received training in Germany in the beginning of the twentieth century. He started his career as a poet rather early in life who, later on, acquired immense maturity. He is one of the few Urdu poets whose compositions required prior initiation for better comprehension. However, in this section, we shall concern ourselves more with his social, cultural and political world view than his poetry.

### 8.3.1 Early Life

Mohammad Iqbal was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1873 at Sialkot, in Punjab. His forefathers were Kashmiri Brahmins who had embraced Islam about three hundred years ago. Mohammad Iqbal looked at his ancestry with pride and gave enough reflection to it in his poetry as well. His initial education was in a traditional Maktab. Later he joined Sialkot Mission School and upon completing matriculation, he went to Lahore for higher studies and joined the Government College there and completed his B.A. in 1897. Two years later, he secured his Masters' degree and was appointed as a lecturer in the Oriental College, Lahore to teach History, Philosophy and English where he served between 1899 and 1905. He went to Europe and secured a Ph.D at Munich and returned to Lahore in 1908. In the course of his stay in Europe, he also obtained degree to practice as a barrister.

### 8.3.2 Ideas on Nationalism

Before Mohammad Iqbal had visited Europe he was given to espouse a rather strong sense of patriotism. For instance his famous song *Sare Jahan se Achcha Hindustan Hamara* was the ultimate tribute to the motherland, India. His poem, *Naya Shivala* too was an example of sincere exhortations to his countrymen to give up petty mindedness and develop broader vision and perspective about the corporate life as Indians. However, upon his return from Europe he seemed to develop some distaste for nationalism because of the way various European nations were pursuing this, The period he was in Europe was truly an age of aggressive nationalism. Nations were attempting to run down each other. Such observations of Iqbal led him to believe that nationalism was too narrow an ideology to make an ideal of

human and territorial groups. However, the point that must be noted here is that nationalism in a colonial society such as India was not directed towards dominating any other nation but seek liberation from colonial rule and exploitation at the hands of the British. The Indian nationalism, as it was unfolding in the course of its evolution, was more progressive than jingoistic.

### 8.3.3 Political Activities

While Iqbal had his one step firmly rooted in poetry and philosophy, his second step gradually started setting into the world of politics as well. He had become familiar with the Muslim League propagation of the demand for separate electorates while he was still in England in 1906. After his return to India in 1908, he joined the provincial Muslim League in Punjab. From this time onwards, Iqbal's concerns remained only with the promotion of the Muslims' interests. In order to engage himself in this exercise, he argued with Muslims that there was no point in opposing the British. He disagreed with many Muslim individuals and groups who were active in the freedom struggle and accused them of harbouring too much of the Western ideas which he thought the nationalism were. In 1909, he argued that for Muslims, the basis for nationhood was Islam itself, since nationality for Muslims was not based on material and concrete notion of such a country in terms of certain physical embodiments. Iqbal argued that in Islam the essence was 'non-temporal' and 'non-spatial' and could not be bound by character and features of a particular social group alone. The question of nationality in Islam was based on abstraction and potentially expansive groups. The values of collective life for the Muslims were based on firm grasp of the principles of Islam. Iqbal believed that Islam was a potent source to challenge the 'race-idea', which had proved to be the hardest barrier in actualising the humanitarian ideal; therefore, the Muslims must reject it. He asserted that Islam was non-territorial and believed in encompassing the entire humanity, thus rejected the limited and narrower boundaries. He asserted that the 'idea of nation' as some kind of principle of human society was in direct clash with Islam since it believed in the principle of human society. In the course of articulation of his political philosophy, he disagreed with those who believed that religion could coexist with political nationalism. He asserted that in a country such as India where different faiths existed, making the land or geographical territory as the basis of nationhood would, in the long run, result in undermining the religion itself because in the event of such a development, Islam will be reduced to mere 'ethical ideal', without its accompanying 'social order'.

Iqbal was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1927 and actively participated in the debates of the Assembly. While participating in the Budget discussion on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1927, he pleaded for more allocation for rural sanitation and medical relief for women. In the course of the proceedings of the House, he also pleaded for more funds for mass education, which he thought was absolutely essential in the interest of the people. However, at the same time, Iqbal was keen that Muslims should develop their own educational institutions without which their history and cultural achievements would be overshadowed. On various occasions in the Assembly debates, he kept on emphasising that to talk about united nationalism was a futile exercise since all the communities were more concerned about their exclusive interests rather than the 'national' interests. All through he never allowed his focus shift away from this position.

In the wake of the communal riots in Punjab in 1927, he pleaded for harmony among the



communities. While Iqbal was a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly he was elected the Secretary of the All India Muslim League. But he soon ran into differences with many leaders of the League on the issue of the boycott of the Simon Commission, which was an all white commission for making suggestions to bring about constitutional changes in the existing Government of India Act 1919. He left the Secretaryship of the League but continued to remain loyal to the ideology and larger principles of the party. Later in 1930 he was invited to preside over the session of the Muslim League at Allahabad. In this session he delivered a speech which was to have delineated certain options which hitherto was not envisaged by anybody else. He argued, "To base a constitution on the conception of a homogeneous India, or apply to India principles dictated by British democratic sentiments is unwittingly to prepare her for a civil war.... The formation of a consolidated North-West Muslim Indian states appears to be the final destiny of Muslims, at least of North-West India....I therefore demand the formation of a consolidated Muslim state in the best interest of India and Islam." This statement of Mohamtnad Iqbal in a way contradicted much of what he was saying since the beginning of 1909 that Islam and many of its principles could not be kept confined to any geographical limits since they were expansive in nature. But his new set of ideas was to become an ideological reference point for the League in times to come.

However, it has to be noted that Iqbal did not maintain consistency in his formulations on the question of nationalism. In March 1933 he remarked that nationalism implied certain race consciousness which was against the grain of his conviction. He argued that if such a consciousness was allowed to take place in the Asian context, it was recipe for some kind of disaster. Again in 1938 he argued that it was not the national unity but human brotherhood alone was the unifying force for the mankind since such a thing would be above the considerations of race, colour, language and nationality. He believed that in order to achieve higher goals of humanity, it was important to blur these distinctions. He reiterated the same principles in his response to Husain Ahmad Madani's argument for territorial nationalism encompassing all religious communities of India. While Iqbal was arguing for a universal brotherhood, according to him, it was to be based on his conviction that it was Islam alone which would provide such a ground. It is not difficult to discern therefore, certain contradictions in his world-view of universal brotherhood based only on Islam, thus leaving out all other philosophy for similar options. Another glaring contradiction that we can notice is that his universalism was tampered with an argument for the Muslims maintaining their separate identity in a clearly demarcated geographical area.

Iqbal's participation in the contemporary political process was full of contradiction and inconsistencies. However his contributions in the realm of poetic creativity were far more enduring. He breathed his last on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1938.

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## **8.4 MWULANA MAUDUDI (1903-1979)**

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Syed Abul A'la Maududi popularly known as Maulana Maududi, is one of the greatest revivalists of Islam in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from having produced a large number of literature concerning Islam and Muslims, he was the founder of the Jamat-i-Islami in 1941. Maulana Maududi was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1903 in a devout Muslim family of Aurangabad, in the present day Maharashtra. His educational training was steeped in Islamic studies right from the beginning. Towards the close of the second decade of the twentieth century he was

drawn to the nationalist movement in the wake of the Non-cooperation-Khilafat movement and was impressed by Gandhiji's work so much that he wrote a book on his personality and work but it was confiscated by the British Government. After a brief stint with a paper called *Taj* at Jabalpur, he came in contact with *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind* a body of Muslim theologians committed to the cause of Indian's struggle for independence, which was founded towards the end of 1919. He became the editor of the paper launched by it called *the Muslim* and served it till the end of 1923 when this paper was closed. Subsequently the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind* launched another paper called *al-Jamiat* which Maulana Maududi again joined it as the editor and continued to serve the paper till the end of 1927.

The time Maulana Maududi broke his links with the *Jamiat*, he launched himself as an independent Islamic thinker with the Publication of *al-Jihad fil-Islam* in 1927, which he had written to address many issues which had arisen as a consequence of the assassination of Swami Shirdhanand and went into some length to argue that not all acts of aggression, a Muslim deserves to describe as Jihad. This book was considerably noticed in religious and political circles. However Maulana Maududi did not have any defined pursuit of career. He came to much wider prominence with the editorship of *Tarjuman-ul-Quran* at Hyderabad since 1936. His writings attracted even Mohammad Iqbal, who invited him to Pathankot and pursue his studies there. He offered the support of some Wakf property there. He moved to Pathankot in January 1938 to establish Darul Islam Academy. However the death of Mohammad Iqbal soon after, made Maulana Maududi return to Lahore to teach Islamiyat at Islamia College there.

#### 8.4.1 Views on Nationalism

There appears some shift in Maulana Maududi's world-view as regards the Muslims being a part of the territorial nationalism or distinct from it. We have already discussed the point that in the early years Maulana Maududi strongly believed in the composite territorial nationalism but from this time onwards he seemed to have undergone ideological transformation. He started arguing that Islamic 'nationhood' was more rational than the territorial nationalism. It had the capacity to absorb all, therefore capable of absorbing all and lay the foundation of cultural unity. He argued that Islamic 'nationhood' could not coexist with other 'nationalities' of race, language and country. He asserted that Muslims must sever all links with the land of birth. In Maududi's perception, Islamic and geographical nationalism were two mutually exclusive entities, therefore he was apprehensive that geographical nationalism among Muslims would undermine Islamic 'nationhood' and unity. He thought that Indian leaders were mistaken in their belief that in order to fight the British, they must create a common nationality. He disagreed with Husain Ahmad Madani's contention that in the Indian context a religious community did not constitute a nation unto itself. On the contrary, all religious communities must politically merge together in order to emerge as a distinct nation on territorial basis. However while Husain Ahmad Madani was making these arguments on behalf of the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind*, he was also conscious of the fact that while Muslims were willing to join the process of the making of a nation, they must retain their distinct religio-cultural identity. Maududi's notion of Islamic 'nationality' reached an incomprehensible length when he argued that all those who were struggling against the British should be aware that if the British were to transfer power to non-Muslims then the very participation of a Muslim in this process would not be valid from the point of view of religion. He further argued that if the Muslims

truly want to fight for the freedom from the British then they should have one clear objective in mind that they would strive to make India *dar-al Islam* where it would be possible for Muslims to organise their life according to the principles of Islam. Around 1937-38 Maulana Maududi proposed some kind of state within a state where the Muslims would enjoy freedom to organise their life according to the Sharia and preserve their 'national life'.

Maulana Maududi's conception of the Muslims constituting some kind of transcendental nation was so strong that he neither endorsed the Congress' approach to bring the whole of India under popular sovereignty of all its people, nor did he endorse the Muslim League's claim that Indian Muslims were a nation unto themselves in order to justify their demand for the partition of India and the making of Pakistan. According to Maulana Maududi, the Muslim League notion of nationalism too was self limiting. In order to propagate the religious and political philosophy of Maulana Maududi, a party was established under his leadership called the Jama't-i-Islami on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1941. At the time of founding the Jamat, a constitution was also drawn up where the emphasis was more on religious matters rather than political.

Encouraged by the criticism of the Congress too, the Muslim League thought of enlisting the support of the Maulana Maududi twice through Maulana Zafar Ahmad Ansari. He was once invited in 1937 to join the research group of the League; in 1945 again similar kind of invitation was extended to him by Maulana Ansari. On both the occasions he turned down the League's invitation. In a booklet titled as *Rah-i-Amal* published in 1944, Maulana Maududi argued that theirs (Muslims) opposition was neither to the Hindus nor the British. Their only aim and objective was establishment of the sovereignty of God. Keeping this in mind he castigated all other Muslim organisations for being obsessed with 'freedom' either from the Hindus or British imperialism. According to him, the real salvation of the Muslims was in deliverance from the rule of those other than God.

Maulana Maududi did not endorse the Muslim League's claim for Pakistan for it was not in tune with his conception of Islamic 'nation' since such a demand was based on the notion of territorial nationalism. He could not have accepted it. However when the partition became imminent, he decided to split the Jama't-i-Islami into two, one part working in Pakistan and the other in India in order to realise the goals it had set before itself at the time of its foundation. It is another matter altogether that in 1948 Maulana Maududi himself migrated to Pakistan and ran into troubles with the Pakistan Government from time to time.

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## **8.5 MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH (1876-1948)**

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Mohammad Ali Jinnah travelled long distances in his political career finally to become the Qaid-i-Azam, which literally means a great leader to the Pakistanis since he had the credit of founding Pakistan after seeking the partition of India on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. It was argued by the All India Muslim League and M.A.Jinnah in March 1940 that Indian Muslims were not only just a religious community seeking certain constitutional arrangements which would ensure better and secure future of the Muslims of India, but also make it a distinct nation. Once such a declaration was made, the next logical step was to demand a state in the name of Pakistan. The man who carried this demand to its fruition was the one and only M.A.Jinnah.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was born on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1876 in the family of a relatively prosperous

business family of Jinnabhai in Karachi. After his initial education in Karachi and Bombay, Jinnah went to England to study law which he soon completed at the age of eighteen years with two more years of stay there at Lincoln Inn's formal training. At the age of twenty he returned to India to join the Bar first in Karachi and later in Bombay and soon established himself among the legal fraternity of the city.

Jinnah became a part of the Congress led politics by joining the party in 1906. At the annual session of the Congress, the same year, he acted as the private secretary to Dadabhai Nauroji who was the president of the Indian National Congress for that year. Around this time he was largely given to a liberal world-view and strongly believed in the constitutional process. He came quite close to a moderate Congress leader, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and received his initial political training under him and soon earned recognition. He was a part of the battery of lawyers who defended Lokmanya Tilak in 1908 when he was prosecuted by the British. In 1909 he was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council from Bombay and excelled in his performance in defending several issues which affected the lives of Indians including the struggle which was going on in South Africa under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. He spoke about the harsh treatment meted out to the Indians there. Jinnah supported Gokhale in 1912 when he came up with the Elementary Education Bill and argued for more allocation of money for the purpose. While Jinnah was still in the Congress, he joined the Muslim League as well on the suggestion of Maulana Mohammad Ali and Wazir Husain in 1913. However before joining the League, he ensured that joining it never meant any compromise on the larger national cause as espoused by the Congress. The same year he was instrumental in accepting the Wakf Validating Bill by the then Viceroy, which was meant to safeguard the interests of the beneficiaries of the Muslim family trusts against the folly of any one member of the family. This particular act of Jinnah earned him recognition among the Muslims.

### **8.5.1 Hindu–Muslim Unity**

Just like Syed Ahmad Khan, Jinnah was also keen to work for the well being of the Muslims. However, his concern for the Muslims was not meant to be at the cost of the Hindu-Muslim unity. As a matter of fact it is important to note that till the elections of 1937 he believed that both the communities must join hands to remain strong in order to overcome the difficulties placed on the Indians by the British Government. Some reflection in this regard was manifest at the time of the Lucknow Pact of 1916 which envisaged certain seat sharing formula between the Hindus and Muslims, in which the Muslims gained better advantages in Muslim minority provinces such as United Provinces while they had conceded more ground to the Hindus and others in the Muslim majority provinces such as the Punjab and Bengal. Important national leaders played a crucial role in this like Tilak. Jinnah too played an important role in bringing about this agreement.

Jinnah was one of the many leaders who did not approve of mixing religion with politics. In the context of the emerging Non-cooperation-khilafat movement, he did not approve of religion being pressed in the service of politics. He was sounding certain note of caution that the consequences of such a strategy might prove to be counterproductive. During 1919-1920, strong religious feelings were stirred among the Muslims on the issue of Khilafat, an Islamic institution in the hands of the Ottomans of Turkey for considerably long time. However after the defeat of Turkey in the First World War, it was feared by Muslims that soon Ottoman

Empire would be fragmented and many Holy places would fall in the hands of the non-Muslims, which was unacceptable to them. In any case, for quite sometime, pan-Islamic upsurge had already generated anti-colonial sentiments among the Muslims. Keeping all these developments in mind, Gandhiji decided to go along with the Muslims and agreed to lead the movement. His understanding was that he, as a good Hindu, was duty-bound to stand by his Muslim compatriots in times of their distress. In the context of all these developments, the Indian National Congress, despite its initial reluctance, finally decided to extend support to Gandhiji; this was the movement with which Jinnah did not agree at all and resigned from the Congress in 1920 not to come back to it ever again.

### 8.5.2 Jinnah and the Muslim League

It must be pointed out that while Jinnah left the Congress, he retained his association with the Muslim League. However, after leaving the Congress, he remained politically dormant but sprung to action once again when it was announced that an all-white Simon Commission would visit India to study the working of the Government of India Act 1919 and make recommendations for bringing about changes in it. All shades of political opinion barring some, decided to boycott the Commission. At this point of time the Muslim League was split into two wings – one led by Mohammad Shafi of the Punjab and the other by M.A. Jinnah. The Shafi wing of the League agreed to cooperate with the Commission whereas the Jinnah faction decided to go along with the Congress in boycotting it. In view of these developments, it was resolved that instead of cooperating with the Commission, Indians would work out their own constitution acceptable to all. In the context of this resolve that Indians would work out their own constitution, various groups activated themselves to come up with proposals which might be given some consideration while preparing the constitution. Many prominent Muslim leaders met in Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1927 under the presidentship of Mohammad Ali Jinnah to discuss Muslim representation in the legislature and after long deliberation came up with certain proposals which are popularly known as the Delhi Declaration. It was for the first time that many Muslim leaders had agreed to give up separate electorates, which was considered a stumbling block in bringing the two important communities together. The Declaration said that giving up separate electorates should be conditioned upon the following: (1) Sind to be separated from the Bombay Presidency and made a separate province (2) reforms to be introduced in the North-West Frontier Provinces and Baluchistan on the same footing as any other province in India (3) in Bengal and Punjab proportion of representation to be made in accordance with the size of population (4) in the Central Legislature, Muslim representation to be not less than one-third, It was said that after these demands were accepted, Muslims would accept joint electorates in all the provinces so constituted and make to Hindu minorities in Bengal, Punjab and North-West Frontier Province similar concessions that the Hindu majorities in other provinces were prepared to make to the Muslims.

The Madras session of the Congress held in December 1927 broadly accepted the suggestion made in the Delhi Declaration and gave assurances to Muslims that their legitimate interests would be secured by reservation of seats in the joint electorates on the basis of population in every province and in the Central Legislature. It had also agreed to other proposals regarding Sind, N.W.F.P. and Baluchistan. In order to work out a constitution, an All Parties Conference was constituted which, in turn, constituted a Drafting Committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru. In the course of deliberations and consultations with all

concerned parties, it came to the fore that despite the Congress approval of the Delhi Declaration, the Hindu Mahasabha was not willing to concede demands raised by various shades of Muslim opinion. As a result, in the final Report which is popularly known as the Nehru Report, these issues were ignored thus causing disappointment to many Muslim groups. However in order to get the final approval of the said Report, an All Parties Conference was convened in Calcutta in December 1928. In this meeting Jinnah made a fervent plea with members present there that for the sake of unity among the communities particularly the Hindus and Muslims, "It is absolutely essential to our progress that Hindu Muslim settlement should be reached, and that all communities should live in friendly and harmonious spirit in this vast country of ours." He further added by way of caution, "Majorities are apt to be oppressive and tyrannical and minorities always dread and fear that their interests and rights, unless clearly defined and safe-guarded by statutory provisions, would suffer.." Jinnah was shouted down in this All Parties Conference. With disappointment Jinnah came back to Bombay and soon after left for England with an intention to settle down there practicing law.

This episode was a turning point in the political life of Jinnah. Determined to stay in England but on the persuasion of Liaqat Ali Khan, the future first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Jinnah decided to return to India in 1934. Soon he was elected as the permanent President of the All India Muslim League. He worked hard to expand the social base of the League. There was one opportunity to test the electoral strength of the League in the context of 1937 elections, which was held under the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935. The said Act was severely criticised by all, including Jinnah. Yet many, including the Congress, thought of using this opportunity to test their respective strengths. The Muslim League could secure only 109 out of total 482 Muslim seats in all British Indian provinces. It was nowhere close to forming the majority in Muslim majority provinces. It turned out to be a sad commentary on the League's performance in the 1937 elections. Combined with such dismal performance, it (League) was alarmed by the Muslim Mass Contact Programme of the Congress and feared that such a programme would undermine its claim to represent Muslims. Coupled with this, there were also two unsuccessful attempts to form coalition Ministries in Bombay Presidency and United Provinces. The Muslim League adopted an aggressive attitude towards the Congress and the Congress-led ministries in various provinces. It charged them of pursuing anti-Muslim policies and started describing the Congress as caste-Hindu party instead of national party.

### 8.5.3 Two Nation Theory

In its opposition to the Congress, the Muslim League crossed all limits and finally came around to the idea of describing the Muslims of India not as a religious community or a minority in a Hindu-majority country but a distinct nation. Thus according to the League's formulations, India was home to not one but two nations which led the demand that India be partitioned so that there could be separate homeland to the Muslims as well. This understanding was put to crystallisation in the annual session of the Muslim League held in Lahore on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1940. The Resolution adopted here is popularly known as the Pakistan Resolution or 'Two-nation theory'. In this resolution it was said that the Muslims of India on account of their religious, cultural and historical distinctiveness in contrast with the Hindus, constituted a nation unto themselves. Since then, Jinnah reiterated this position on all occasions and from all platforms. From this time onwards, the Muslim League, under Jinnah, did not look back

and never considered any settlement **which** was **not conceding** Pakistan. In this effort, **of the** League, the British Government was more than obliging right **since** the time **of August Offer of 1940** and right through the Cripps Mission of **1942** and the Cabinet Mission **of 1946**. In the **Simla** Conference held in 1945, Jinnah had **argued** that **in** the event of any interim arrangements of ministry formation, only the Muslim League would have the right to nominate Muslim members. In an unsaid manner, Lord Wavel, the then Viceroy, **conceded** this **demand** raised by the Muslim League. As a consequence many Muslim political leaders in provinces such as **Punjab** switched sides in favour of the League and in the elections **of 1945-46** it was able to secure almost 75% of the Muslim votes. However it is important to mention that these elections were held under the provisions of the Government of India Act 1935 and the average franchised percentage did not exceed more than 15% of the **total** population, Muslims being no exception to it.

It is pertinent to recall that there was opposition to **Jinnah's** formulations of Muslims constituting a nation from within the Muslims, apart from the Congress and others. For instance within one month of the passing of the 'two-nation theory', various Muslim political formations from different parts of the country and representing different sections but **firmly** committed to the cause of Indian nationalism, came to form a coalition called Azad **Muslim** Conference. In April **1940** a huge convention was organised in Delhi where 'Two-nation theory' was challenged. It was argued that while **Muslims** were a distinct religious community with their cultural world-view, they did not constitute a nation as claimed by **Jinnah** and the Muslim League. In several places the League had to face electoral challenge from the **constituent** of this Azad Muslim conference. For instance in **Bihar** six Muslim League candidates were defeated in the provincial elections in 1946 by the candidates of All India **Momin** Conference, a body of Muslim weavers. Jamaat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, a body of Muslim theologians, too kept on challenging the League for its demand for partition. It vehemently argued that Muslims were not a nation but a religious community and it was an integral part of the single territorial nationhood along with the rest of the people of India.

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## 8.6 SUMMARY

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In the **preceding** pages we have discussed the emergence and evolution of the **Muslim** thought only with reference to four persons. In all cases we have noticed that these thoughts were fixed entities since they were continuously evolving in the context of certain historical developments. In many cases some thoughts of these men became irrelevant while in others they persisted. However it is important to underline that Sir Syed was **more** concerned about securing the future of Muslims through modern education and reconciliation with the British. In case of Mohammad Iqbal and Maulana Maududi, we find that they were more concerned with the theological aspects of Muslims' life. They both treated nationalism outside the **pale** of Islamic principles of life. But Mohammad Ali Jinnah essentially focused on the political dimensions of the collective life of the Muslims. He started well in tune with Indian nationalism but in due course of time adopted a belligerent attitude and called **Muslims** a nation, therefore justifying the demand for partition of India and the making of Pakistan.

It is important **to** bear in mind that while these four were important figures who attempted to influence the thought process and **political developments**, there were many others in their contemporary times who held diametrically opposite **view** to all these. **At** the same time, let

us bear in mind that since the Muslims were not a homogeneous community, no single individual or formation could ever make a legitimate claim to represent the entire community in the realms of thoughts and politics. We have to take into account diverse voices emanating from equally diverse society such as India's without any exception.

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## 8.7 EXERCISES

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1. Analyse Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's views on Hindu-Muslim Unity.
2. **Summarise** Mohammad Iqbal's ideas on Nationalism and his contribution to the Muslim Thought.
3. The Islamic nationhood and geographical nationalism, as Maulana Maududi argued, are two distinct identities. Explain.
4. Briefly analyse M.A. Jinnah's contribution to the 'Two Nation Theory'.



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# UNIT 9 NATION AND IDENTITY CONCERNS: E.V. RAMASWAMY NAICKER, NAZRUL ISLAM, PANDITA RAMABAI, JAIPAL SINGH, KAHN SINGH

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## Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker (1879-1973)
  - 9.2.1 Critique of Hinduism and Brahminical Domination
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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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Concern for Indian nation was never expressed in a homogeneous way. Social and political thinkers of modern India understood the nature of Indian society and polity in different ways for obvious reasons; therefore, construction of nation **was** never uniform. While some of them designed an **overarching** and encompassing Indian identity, others constructed Indian nation on the **foundation** of particular identities like religion, caste, **ethnicity** and gender, language, etc. In this lesson, an attempt has been **made** to understand the **central** ideas and concerns of some of the thinkers of modern India who represented and **championed** particular identities; they include: E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker(1879-1973), Pandita Ramabai(1858-1922), Jaipal Singh(1903-1970), Kazi Nazrul Islam(1899-1976) and Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha(1861-

1938). All these thinkers, unfortunately, have not received enough attention in the 'mainstream' literature of political science, **despite their** immense socio-political contributions and **mobilisational** capabilities.

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## 9.2 E. V. RAMASWAMY NAICKER (1879-1973)

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E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, popularly known as Periyar (Great Sage), was born in Erode, in a family of **well-off** artisans. He married at an early age of 13, but after six years became an ascetic. Wandering all over India, particularly the Hindu pilgrimage centres, he experienced the 'evils' of Hinduism and the priestly exploitations.

### 9.2.1 Critique of Hinduism and Brahminical Domination

**Periyar's** negative perception of Hinduism and Brahmins needs to be analysed in the socio-political context of Tamil Nadu. Like their counterparts in other provinces, in Tamil Nadu as well, Brahmins always enjoyed a dominant position in the Hindu scriptures and rituals. Though constituted only about 3 per cent of Tamils, they continued to dominate the public spheres even under the colonial rule. Their settlement in fertile areas further enhanced their social power. In the pre-colonial Tamil Nadu, although Brahmins did not monopolise the ownership of land, they virtually monopolised scribal occupation, which enabled them to acquire Western education much faster than others under the colonial rule. This gave the Brahmins an early lead in the professions. Further, they used a dialect having a distinct character and with a far greater Sanskritic content. Thus, many Tamil Brahmins were very conscious of the sanskritic nature of their sub-culture and claimed with pride to be 'Aryans', suggesting a quasi-racial distinction from other classes.

To Naicker, Hinduism was a tool of Brahminical domination and the Brahmins epitomised Hindu arrogance and perpetrated social injustice. He castigated Hinduism as an opiate by which the Brahmins had dulled and subdued the masses. Naicker blamed the Aryans for introducing an unjust and oppressive social system in the country and espoused a Dravidian racial **consciousness** to defend the rights of the Dravidians against the Aryan domination. He argued that a Hindu may be a Dravidian, but a Dravidian "in the real sense of the term cannot and shall not be a Hindu."

Naicker was convinced that Hinduism perpetuated casteism, and must be resisted. Thus, he **publicly** ridiculed the Puranas as fairy tales, not only imaginary and irrational but also grossly immoral.

### 9.2.2 Critique of the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi

The scope of the associational activity and self-government increased in the early decades of the century. Brahmins set the tone of Madras city politics in the **1910s**, of the Home Rule Leagues sprouting during the World War I and of nationalist mobilisation after the War. They controlled Congress's state level leadership until World War II. Naicker was active in the Congress-led Freedom Struggle for sometime. He participated in the non-cooperation movement, offered *satyagraha* and defended *khadi*. But Naicker's efforts to get Tamil Nadu Congress to adopt resolutions in favour of caste quotas in political **representation** were continually defeated between 1919 and 1925.

Moreover, he got disenchanted with the 'paternalistic' aspects of Gandhi's social programme, which he thought, was conducive to the legitimisation of the prevailing social order. Periyar was opposed to Gandhi's reconstructed version of varnashrama *dharma* as it did not correspond to the way the caste system had historically functioned. Periyar also interpreted Gandhian nationalism as a hegemonic project to maintain the dominance of the Brahmins and 'Brahminism' in Indian society and the predominant influence of north India in the national politics. Naicker's growing dissatisfaction with Gandhi and the Congress, which he began to express from 1925 onwards in the journal *Kudi Arasu*, led him and his followers to found the Self Respect Association in 1926.

Protesting against the Brahminical dominance in high politics, he quit the Congress and developed Dravidian cultural alternatives to the prevailing hegemonic Brahminical culture. In 1925, he organised the "Self Respect Movement", designed as Dravidian Uplift, seeking to expose Brahminical tyranny and the deceptive methods by which they controlled all spheres of Hindu life. Thus, Naicker advocated: "God should be destroyed; Religion should be destroyed; Congress should be destroyed; Gandhi should be destroyed; The Brahmin should be destroyed."

Naicker's methods of struggle included the destruction of the images of Hindu deities such as Rama and Ganesha. According to Periyar, "Rama and Sita are despicable characters, not worthy of imitation and admiration even by the lowest of fourth-rate humans." Ravana (a Dravidian hero presented as a demon in the north), on the other hand, is depicted as a Dravidian of "excellent" character. In his preface to *The Ramayana : A True Reading*, he slates that "the veneration of the story any longer in Tamil Nad is injurious and ignominious to the self-respect of the community and of the country." Periyar's methods of breaking idols and taking out anti-God processions, earned him a lot of criticism. Yet he was adamant that from his radical point of view, idols were symbols of Brahminical ideology and superstition.

### 9.2.3 Naicker's Discourse

Portraying Naicker as just anti-Brahmin or anti-God would be not doing justice. He was a radical social reformer. His determined campaign against Hindu orthodoxy accompanied by rationalism and social reform, transformed the social landscape of Tamil Nadu. His radical social reform campaign caught the imagination of the **underclass**: As in the Self-Respect Movement, one of Naicker's basic objectives was to remove all "superstitious belief" based upon religion or tradition. No **member** was allowed to wear the sectarian marks of faith across his forehead. Members were urged to boycott the use of Brahmin priests in ceremonies. He campaigned for widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage. Thus, his thrust on non-Brahminism must be placed in the context of the rigid rituals that had legitimised caste oppression at that time.

Naicker claimed that his brand of politics was oriented on the contrary, towards the emancipation of the subordinate groups in Tamil society, much as **liberalism** had opposed upper class and clerical dominance in the West. Naicker sought to associate himself with the enlightenment heritage by elaborating a materialist ontology and a genealogy of Brahminical morals as founded on a resentment of worldly non-Brahmin virtues. Further, he claimed Rousseau, Marx and Ingersoll as sources of inspiration and **pointed** to a future in which caste divisions and 'superstition' would yield place to pluralism, secularisation and acceptance of modern science and **technology**. Such self-representations promoted some scholars to view

the Self Respect movement as consonant with 'British liberal assumptions.'

Important aspects of Naicker's ideology and the manner in which it was deployed in mobilisation were out of tune with liberalism. Far from relying on the concept of abstract citizen central to British liberalism, Naicker adopted ethnic categories drawn from colonial knowledge and sought to accord Shudra primacy in the political community. In contrast to the north, the south India, even before the colonial rule, had experienced considerable social mobility at different points and the intermediate castes increasingly rejecting the traditional *varna order*. As kingly power grew, mercantile and warrior groups acquired more land as well as dominance. The onset of the British rule constricted the kingly path to political power. Naicker's vision of Shudra primacy provided the ideological basis on which later Dravidian ideologues reinforced the dominance of non-Brahmin elite, both old and new, such as rich farmers, merchants and industrialists. Thus, the emancipatory potential of Naicker's notions of social identity remained a subsidiary aspect of dravidianist project right through.

#### 9.2.4 Dravidian Mobilisation

Naicker conceived Dravidian community primarily in terms of a coalition of **megacastes**—the non-Brahmin Hindu castes of Tamil Nadu, i.e. Tamil speaking Hindus who were neither Brahmins nor SCs. Non-Brahminism endured in Tamil Nadu because it was linked to Tamil nationalism from the 1930s onwards in a populist discourse. The opposition to Brahmin dominance had the potential of serving as a banner for subordinate non-Brahmin groups to buttress their **dominance**.

Under the Congress Ministry of C. Rajagopalachari in 1937, Hindi was introduced to the South as a compulsory subject in schools. Taking it as an affront to Tamil culture and its rich literary traditions, Naicker waved black flags of rebellion in his first anti-Hindi campaign. The **campaign** forced the government to change Hindi into an optional subject. Naicker saw the imposition of Hindi as a subjugation of Tamil people which could be avoided only through the creation of a Dravidian state. In 1938, Naicker was elected President of the Justice Party. The Party resolved that **Tamilnadu** should be made a separate state, loyal to the British Raj and "directly under the Secretary of State for India."

In 1939, Naicker **organised** the "Dravida Nadu Conference" for the advocacy of a separate and independent **Dravidasthan**. The demand was again reiterated the following year in response to the Lahore resolution demanding Pakistan passed by the Muslim League. Naicker gave **full** support to the **scheme** for Pakistan and tried to enlist support for the creation of a Dravidasthan. The basic presupposition of the movement was that the Dravidian non-Brahmin peoples (Tamil, **Telugu**, **Kannada**, and Malayalam) were of a racial stock and culture, which distinguished them from the Aryan Brahmins.

In 1944, the justice Party was reorganised as Dravida Kazhagam(DK). The object of the DK was proclaimed to be the attainment of a sovereign independent Republic, which would be federal in nature with four units corresponding to the linguistic divisions, each having residual powers and autonomy of internal administration. It would be a "classless society," an egalitarian Dravida Nadu to which the depressed and downtrodden could pledge allegiance. **The** party proclaimed its opposition to the British Raj, and Naicker called upon the DK members to renounce all titles conferred by the British and resign all offices connected with the National

War front. This action greatly enhanced the prestige of the movement and the DK could no longer be considered a handmaiden of the British, as was the Justice Party from the very beginning.

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## 9.3 PANDITA RAMABAI (1858-1922)

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Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) was one of the greatest women of modern India. Exceptionally learned, Ramabai, an outspoken champion of women's rights and social reform, earned the unique distinction of being the sole woman representative in the male-dominated world of gender reforms. As Ramabai 'transgressed' the boundaries and contested patriarchy in her educational and missionary activities, she understandably became the most controversial upper-caste woman of her times, and hence, was consciously 'erased' from the modern Indian history for a long period.

### 9.3.1 Early Life: Non-conformist Background

Ramabai's father Anant Shastri Dongre, a Chitpavan Brahmin, a non-conformist, invited the ire of his powerful conservative community brethren when he decided to teach Sanskrit to his wife which was regarded 'heretical'. Sanskrit, the 'divine language' was after all reserved for the upper-caste men. As consequences of his non-conformism, he had to live outside the community and took to wandering the country with his family, living off of donations as a *puranic* storyteller. His life was unique in the sense that while leading a Brahminical way of life, he strongly rejected some of its core principles. Ramabai learnt Sanskrit and Puranas in those hard days, full of suffering and pain. Thus, Ramabai's break with Brahminism was inevitable, considering the life and the legacy she inherited from her father.

After the death of her parents, Ramabai arrived in Calcutta in 1878 at the age of nineteen. Interestingly, the religious elite of the city warmly welcomed her and encouraged her to study the Vedas and Upanishads despite the prohibition on women to do so. She impressed the religious elite of the city with her mastery over Sanskrit language and texts and received the title of 'Pandita' (Scholar) and 'Saraswati' (Goddess of Learning). Ramabai soon took up her social reform agenda by travelling widely in Bengal and addressing women on the need for their education and emancipation, drawing heavily on the mythological figures of educated and independent women.

### 9.3.2 Contesting Patriarchy: Hinduism and Christianity

Ramabai's reading of Dharmashastras made her deeply conscious of the contempt with which women of all castes and men of the lower caste were treated in these texts. Like women, rules did not permit the Shudras to perform the same religious acts as the upper castes. Ramabai rejected this discrimination in her personal life when she decided to accept the marriage proposal from a Bipin Behari, a Shudra, thereby decisively breaking with the tradition. Bipin was excommunicated as it was an inter-caste marriage by civil registration. Just after two years of marriage, Bipin's death forced widowhood on young Ramabai at the age of twentyfour. After her initial experiences of oppressive widowhood, Ramabai refused to be confined to the domestic space and catapulting herself into the public arena.

Returning to Maharashtra, Ramabai experienced her first public encounter with the forces of patriarchy when she set up the Arya Mahila Samaj in 1882 in Poona to mobilise women,

and aroused instant hostility. She brought out a book in **Marathi**, *Stree Dharma Niti* [Morals for Women] with the objective of counselling the helpless and ignorant women. The *Kesari* commented: "In reality, it is the task of men to eradicate these and other evil customs in our society. Women cannot therefore interfere in it for many years to come – even if they are 'panditas' and have reached the ultimate stage of reform ... Our women will have to be under the control of men for a long time to come." Undeterred, Ramabai set up a home for high-caste Hindu widows and made an appeal to the Hunter Commission to provide training facilities to women to become teachers and doctors enabling them to serve other women.

However, she failed to connect to the women in Maharashtra and felt alienated as she had no community, no social base and no real emotional bonds to fall back upon. This led to her search for solace in religion and God which could simultaneously accommodate her social agenda as well as her personal quest for religious fulfillment. Thus she got converted to Christianity by the Anglican Church.

Ramabai's encounter with the patriarchy of the Anglican Church across the globe was no less harsh. When she was offered a professorship which would involve her teaching to male students, the Bishop of Bombay protested, or "Above all things, pray believe that her influence will be ruined forever in India if she is known to have taught young men." **Ramabai** promptly replied: "It surprises me very much to think that neither my father nor my husband objected [to] my mother's or my teaching young men while some young people are doing so." Thus, the major contestation in Ramabai's educational and missionary activities was that of patriarchy.

A Christian convert and renowned social reformer, **Pandita Ramabai** was a scholar of Hinduism who had profound disagreements with its philosophical premises, particularly with regard to women, and later as a Christian convert who rebelled against Christian dogma. Thus, her life was a narrative of complex contestations—that of a woman against male hegemony both in Hindu society as well as Anglican Church, that of an Indian convert against the British Anglican bishops and nuns, that of an Indian Christian missionary against the oppression of Hindu women.

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## **9.4 JAIPAL SINGH (1903–1970)**

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Jaipal Singh (1903–1970), was a multi-faceted personality—a distinguished parliamentarian, a champion sportsman, an educationist, a powerful orator and above all, the leader of the Adivasis. Jaipal alias Pramod Pahan was born at the Takra village of Khunti subdivision of the present day **Jharkhand**. In childhood, his job was to look after the cattle herd. His destiny had a turn around with his admission to St. Paul's School, **Ranchi**, in 1910. Then Jaipal moved to England and graduated from St John's College, Oxford with Honours in Economics. Jaipal was selected in Indian Civil Service from which he later resigned. In 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, he captained the Indian hockey team which won the gold medal. In 1934, Jaipal joined teaching at the Prince of Wales College at Achimota, Gold Coast, Ghana. In 1937, he returned to India as the principal incumbent of the Rajkumar College, Raipur. In 1938, he joined the Bikaner princely State as foreign secretary. Jaipal thought that with his varied experience he could be more useful to the country through the Congress. His encounter with Rajendra Prasad at the Sadaquat Ashram in Patna, however, did not go well. The then Governor of Bihar, Sir Maurice Hallet offered to nominate him to the Bihar Legislative

Council but Jaipal declined. In deference to **their wishes**, Jaipal then decided to go to **Ranchi** and assess the situation for himself. The return to **Ranchi** was Jaipal's homecoming.

When the news got around that Jaipal had arrived in **Ranchi**, there was great excitement among the Adivasis. The united Adivasi forum called Adivasi Sabha, formed in 1938 made him the president of the-organisation. As **many as** 65,000 people gathered to listen to Jaipal's presidential speech on January 20, 1939. They came from all over, walked on foot for days together to have a glimpse of him as they had done in the past for Birsa Munda, the legend. His oratory, simultaneously in English, Hindi, Sadani and Mundari, mesmerised men and women from all walks of life.

"The Adivasi movement stands primarily for the moral and material advancement of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas," he **declared** and set as his goal a separate administrative status for the area. He was instantly the people's "**Marang Gomke**" — their **Supreme Leader**. The history of the region changed henceforth. With Jaipal at the helm, there was no looking back. He worked ceaselessly for a better future for his fellow Adivasis everywhere, even beyond the frontiers of south Bihar.

The Adivasi Sabha was changed **into** All India Adivasi Mahasabha. On the national political front, Jaipal had alienated himself from the Congress personally. He played an active role in the anti-Compromise Congress conference at Ramqarh in 1940 in close alliance with **Subhas** Bose. He went against the Congress stand and supported the British in **the World War II** and recruited men and women from Chhotanagpur for the British army.

Since 1946, he was a member of the Constituent Assembly, the Provisional Parliament and was elected four times to the Parliament until his death in 1970. **As** a close friend of the doyen of anthropology, S.C. Roy and Verrier **Elwin** and supported by Ambedkar, he led his "glorious struggle" both inside and outside the legislature to establish the Adivasi identity. With the creation of the Jharkhand Party and the induction of non-Adivasis into it in 1950, he changed the emotive cultural movement in Jharkhand into a regional political movement, free from any communal bias.

The Jharkhand Party (JHP) was the first legitimate political party that drew the political agenda and gave the direction to the future of Jharkhand politics. The party became so strong that it played a vital role in the formation of the government in the **neighbouring** province of Orissa in 1957.

### **9.4.1 Championing Adivasi Identity**

As a member of the Constituent Assembly Jaipal played **a** key role in raising the issue of Adivasi identity. The dominant view in the Assembly reflected a patronising attitude towards the tribals; the discontentment in the tribal areas existed due to their exclusion from the mainstream development pattern. It was believed that an industry-led model of development would be a panacea for all ills in the tribal areas. The emphasis was on the 'civilising mission' and assimilation of tribals into the national mainstream.

Jaipal Singh countered this dominant view. Participating in the debates on the **Draft** Constitution, 'on **24** August 1949, Jaipal Singh delivered an important speech on Adivasi identity. He raised

the existence of a tribal community in Jharkhand. He emphasised that the tribal people were the true and original inhabitants of India, and as such had a claim to the whole of India. Yet, he emphasised that reservation of seats for tribals in the legislatures was necessary. He also made an effort to divorce the case of Scheduled Tribes from that of the Scheduled Castes.

Jaipal argued that Adivasi Society always emphasised on equality and democracy. As he stated: "Adivasi society was the most democratic element in this country. Can the rest of India say the same thing? ... In Adivasi society all are equal, rich or poor. Everyone has equal opportunity and I do not wish that people should get away with the idea that by writing this constitution and operating it we are trying to put a new idea into the Adivasi society. What we are actually doing is you are learning and taking something. . . . Non-Adivasi society has learnt much and has still to learn a good deal. Adivasis are the most democratic people and they will not let India get smaller or weaker. . . . I would like the members [to] not be so condescending."(*Constituent Assembly Debates* 1949)

Asserting an Adivasi identity and advocating a key role for the community in the national politics, he observed: "What is necessary is that the backward groups in our country should be enabled to stand on their own legs so that they can assert themselves. It is not the intention of this Constitution, nor do I desire it, that the advanced community should be carrying my people in their arms for the rest of eternity. All that we plead is that the wherewithal should be provided . . . so that we will be able to stand on our own legs and regain the lost nerves and be useful citizens of India. . . . I may assure non-Adivasis that Adivasis will play a much bigger part than you imagine, if only you will be honest about your intentions and let them play a part they have a right to play." (*Constituent Assembly Debates* 1949).

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## 9.5 KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM (1899-1976)

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Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), the national poet of Bangladesh, was born in Churulia, Burdhanan district, West Bengal. He lost his father in his childhood and had a financial hardship, thereby forced to work as a teacher in a lower Islamic school at the age of nine. Though his education went only up to tenth grade, he continued learning Arabic and Persian languages. As a boy, he translated Persian ghazals and Arabic writings in Bengali. He also educated himself enough to enjoy the writings of Keats, Shelly and Whitman. Nazrul became a literary genius, writing 50 books of poetry and songs, 6 books of stories and novels, 3 books of translations, 53 plays, verse-plays and operas, 2 movie scripts, 5 books of essays and 4000 songs and ghazals. He holds the world record of recorded songs, for most of which, the music was composed by Nazrul himself.

### 9.5.1 The Rebel Poet (Bidhrohi Kobi)

Nazrul was opposed to the British rule of India and took an active part through his writings on *Swadishi* and *Khilafat* movement. He had to undergo rigorous imprisonment for a year for his writing *Andamoyeer Agamaney* which appeared in *Dhumketu*. Rabindranath Tagore called Nazrul "Dhumketu"—the Comet. For Mahatma Gandhi, Nazrul's poem was "the song of the spinning wheel" and Nazrul was "the ultimate spirit of the spinning wheel" and freedom ran through his vein.



Nazrul came to be known as Bidrohi Kobi—the rebel poet—for his astonishing masterpiece “The Bidrohi.” This was a furious manifesto of self-consciousness against immorality. As Sajid Kamal describes: “A universal proclamation, an affirmation, an inspiration, an invocation, of ‘The Rebel’ within the hearts of each ‘I’ of the common humanity which lay oppressed, subjugated, exploited, resigned and powerless.” It is said that Nazrul would have been Nazrul even if he had not written anything else but “The Bidrohi.” Thus, Kazi Nazrul Islam refused to compromise with the unjust.

## 9.5.2 Hindu-Muslim Issue

In the context of the Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta in 1926, quoting Rabindranath in ‘Hindu-Muslim [The tale of tails]’, he emphasised Gurudev’s comment: “You see, one can sever the tail that is outside, but who can sever the tail that is inside?”

To Nazrul, those who grow tails—inside or outside—become animals. Those tailed animals whose ferocity or cruelty is obvious through their “horny” display and one does not have to be as much concerned about them.

In this context, Nazrul criticises the conscious attempt perpetuated by Hindus and Muslims to construct their respective oppositional identities through Tiki (tuft) and Dari (beard). Nazrul’s satire is striking: “The birthplace of this inner tail must be Tiki-pur and Dari-stan. What a primitive (adim) and overpowering propensity of human being to be like animals! Their sadness about not being able to grow tail has found a remedial consolation in growing Tiki-Dari.”

Nazrul regrets how the universal relation of humanity has been transformed into adversity/animosity by raising walls after walls. He observes that one can live with the truth of religion, but the overbearing nature of the books of laws/codes create all the problems. Nazrul does not find difficulty “tolerating Hinduhood (hindutto) or Muslimhood (musalmanotto), but Tiki-tto/Dari-tto is intolerable because those seem to engender lot of animosity and friction.” Nazrul argues that such symbols which construct the essentials of religious identities have nothing to do with religion. Thus, he comments: “Having Tiki is not essential to being a Hindu, it might be pedantry. Similarly, Dari is not essential to being a Muslim, it’s mullatto. These two brands of hair-bunches have caused so much hair-pulling.”

A strong believer in composite culture Nazrul blames pundits and Mullahs for being responsible for constructing confrontational identities on the basis of meaningless outer symbols and divide the communities. As he concludes: “Today’s squabble is also between pundit and mullah, not between Hindu-Muslim. The mace of Narayan and sword of Allah won’t have problem, because they are the same, and weapon in the hand of someone does not strike the other hand of the same person. He is pronoun (shorbonam), all names have merged in Him. In all this fight and squabble it is comforting that Allah or Narayan is neither Hindu nor Muslim. He has no Dari or Tiki. Absolutely “clean”! I am so upset about this Tiki-Dari because these seem to be reminders to human beings that I am different, you are different. These outwardly marks make humanity forget her eternal blood relation.”

He finds it unfortunate that Krishna-Muhammad-Christ have become communal property, and all these squabbles centre on this property rights. “One is saying, our Allah; the other

is saying, our Hari. As if, the Creator is like cow-goat. And the charge of settling such matters is on the shoulder of Justice Sir **Abdul** Rahim, Pundit **Madan** Mohon Malyobbo, etc. One easily can see the outcomes by visiting the wards (full of wounded bodies) of the Medical College."

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## 9.6 BHAI KAHN SINGH NABHA (1861-1938)

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Bhai Kahn Singh, a distinguished Sikh scholar, was born in the village of **Sabaz Banera**, Patiala. His father Narain Singh was the in-charge of a Gurdwara at **Nabha**. Kahn Singh did not attend any formal school or college, yet he mastered several branches of learning through traditional education. By the age of ten he could recite with ease the Guru Granth Sahib. He also studied Sanskrit as well as Persian. In 1887, he was appointed tutor to Tikka Ripudaman Singh, the heir apparent of Sikh State of **Nabha**. From the Maharaja's private secretary to the judge of the High Court, he held different positions in the state.

In 1885, he accidentally met Max Arthur Macauliffe who was working on Sikh scriptures and history of early Sikhism. Macauliffe took Kahn Singh to England and depended a great deal on his advice and guidance acknowledging his contribution; he assigned Kahn Singh the copyright of his 6-volume *The Sikh Religion*. From among Bhai Kahn Singh's numerous works, *Gurshabad Ratanakar Mahan Kosh*, the first encyclopaedia of Sikhism, will always remain a monumental one. Besides his maiden work *Raj Dharam* (1884), his other prominent works include: *Gurmat Prabhakar*, a glossary of Sikh terminology, concepts and institutions, *Gurmat Sudhakar*, an anthology of important Sikh texts, scriptural and historical, *Gur Chand Divakar* and *Gur Sabad Alankar*, dealing primarily with rhetoric and prosody employed in Guru Granth Sahib and some other Sikh texts. His *Gur Girah Kasauti* answers some of the questions raised by his pupil, Tikka Ripudaman Singh, about the meanings of certain hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib, and his *Sharab Nikhedh* is a didactic work stressing the harmful effects of drinking. Among his other works are *Visnu Purana*, *Sadd and Chandi di Var*. Bhai Kahn Singh lived his life totally immersed in his scholarly pursuits and left a permanent imprint on the subsequent Sikh literature. His works continued to enrich the contemporary Sikh life in its diverse aspects and his writings subtly moulded the course of Sikh awakening at the turn of the century.

### 9.6.1 Hum Hindu Nahin: We are not Hindus

In 1898, he published *Hum Hindu Nahin* (*We are not Hindus*) with a specific purpose. The title makes Kahn Singh's view abundantly clear. It was a response to the **Arya Samaj** propaganda that Sikhs were just a sect of Hindus. His book set forth forcefully the Sikh standpoint with regard to the Sikh identity. It represented the dominant view of the Singh Sabha movement and has ever since retained the fame, which it so quietly acquired. It is worth stressing that the approach adopted in this book is neither hostile nor aggressive. In his presentation, he took great care to stress that he sought peace, not discord.

Bhai Kahn Singh was a revolutionary *Gursikh* far ahead of his times. Kahn Singh justified the need of such a work as 'We are not Hindus' when "it is perfectly obvious that the Khalsa is indeed distinct from Hindu society." He brings out the significance of his work through a parable, which runs briefly as follows: Guru Gobind Singh once covered a donkey with a lion

skin and set it loose in the wasteland. Men as well as cattle thought it was a lion and were so frightened that none dared approach it. Released from the misery of carrying burdens and free to graze fields to its heart's content, the donkey grew plump and strong. It spent its days happily roaming the area around Anandpur. One day, however it was attracted by the braying of a mare from its old stable. There it was recognised by the potter who removed the lion skin, replaced its pannier-bags, and once again began whipping it to make it work.

The Guru used this parable to teach his Sikhs an important lesson. "My dear sons," he said, "I have not involved you in a mere pantomime as in the case of this donkey I have freed you, wholly and completely, from the bondage of caste. You have become my sons and Sahib Kaur has become your mother: Do not follow the foolish example of the donkey and return to your old caste allegiance. If forgetting my words and abandoning the sacred faith of the Khalsa you return to your various castes your fate will be that of the donkey. Your courage will desert you and you will have lived your lives in vain." Thus, Kahn Singh emphasises the casteless aspect of Sikhism which makes it different from the caste-ridden Hinduism.

Kahn Singh regretted that many of his brethren were in fact neglecting this aspect of the Guru's teaching. They regard themselves as Sikhs of the Khalsa but accept the Hindu tradition though Sikh religion is distinct from the Hindu religion. The reason for this, as Kahn Singh argues, "is that they have neither read their own Scriptures with care nor studied the historical past. Instead they have spent their time browsing through erroneous material and listening to the deceitful words of the self-seeking. The tragedy is that these brethren are falling away from the Khalsa."

Kahn Singh was convinced that India "will flourish when people of all religions are loyal to their own traditions, yet willing to accept other Indians as members of the same family when they recognise that harming one means harming the nation, and when religious differences are no longer an occasion for discord." He advised the Sikhs to practice their religion in the harmonious spirit of Guru Nanak, "for thus we shall ensure that mutual envy and hatred do not spread. At the same time, you will grow in affection for all your fellow countrymen, recognising all who inhabit this country of India as one with yourself." Thus, Bhai Kahn Singh, while advocating a separate Sikh identity, does not view it as oppositional to other religious/community identities.

Kahn Singh made a pioneering contribution to the Singh Sabha Movement. He had to face expulsion from the Nabha state because he recommended idols be removed from Darbar Sahib. He also undertook enormous efforts to establish the Khalsa college at Amritsar, thereby boosting a movement for Sikh education.

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## 9.7 SUMMARY

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This lesson dwelt on how these political thinkers, while analysing the socio-political milieu of colonial India, brought different identities to the political domain. Naicker focused on a Dravidian identity and culture; Ramabai's struggle was against the patriarchal order within Hinduism and Christianity; Jaipal Singh championed the cause of the adivasis; Nazrul's protest was against the artificial division of Hindus and Muslims on the basis of constructed symbols; and Kahn Singh sharpened a distinct Sikh identity. Manifestation of these diverse

identities sharpen our understanding of colonial as well as post-colonial India.

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## **9.8 EXERCISES**

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- 1) Explain Naicker's ideology of mobilisation to establish just serial order.
- 2) Write a note on Naicker's Dravidian of movement in Tamil Nadu.
- 3) Explain pandita Rama Bai's contribution to Women's rise and reform.
- 4) Write a note on Jaipal Singh's political leadership.
- 5) Explain the various contribution of Nazrul Islam to the growth of Nationalism in India.
- 6) Write a note on Bhai Kahn Singh and his views on Sikh identity.

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# UNIT 10 M.K. GANDHI

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## Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Philosophical Foundations of Gandhi's Political Perspective
- 10.3 Views on Human Nature
- 10.4 Relationship between Religion and Politics
  - 10.4.1 Concept of Religion
  - 10.4.2 Concept of Politics
  - 10.4.3 Relationship between Religion and Politics
- 10.5 Unity of Ends and Means
  - 10.5.1 Relationship Between Means and Ends
- 10.6 Satya, Satyagraha and Ahimsa
- 10.7 Concept of Swaraj
- 10.8 On Parliamentary Democracy
- 10.9 Grain Swaraj or Development from Below
- 10.10 Ideas on the economy
- 10.11 Sarvodaya: The Rise of All
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- 10.13 Evils of Industrialism
- 10.14 Concept of Swadeshi
- 10.15 Summary
- 10.16 Exercises

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), herein after Gandhiji, was undoubtedly the most authentic and celebrated representative of the wisdom and culture of India in our times. His countrymen address him, with respect, as the Mahatma. For Many, **among** the greatest, Gandhiji was the great. He was a social reformer, an economist, a political philosopher and a seeker of truth. We **consider** him as a 'yugapurusha', one who inaugurated a new era.

The contribution of Mohandas **Karamchand** Gandhi to the Indian national movement was **unparalleled**. He made the Indian National Congress a **peoples'** Congress and the national movement a **mass** movement. He made people fearless and bold and taught them the **non-violent methods** for fighting against injustice. He had a passion for individual liberty which was closely bound with his understanding of truth and self-realisation. His search for truth

led him to make deep forays within his own inner self as it led him to probe into the natural and social world around him, particularly the tradition which he considered his own.

Gandhiji's philosophy was a profound engagement with modernity and its pitfalls. Against the evils of wanton industrialisation, materialism and selfish pursuits, Gandhiji suggested, in turn, swadeshi, primacy of the self and trusteeship; against the institution of state, as the force personified, and the prevalent notion of democracy where only heads are counted, he favoured a swaraj type of democracy where everything springs from the free individual and where decisions are made bottom-up with the locus of power below. He proposed a minimal slate, vested only with coordinative powers, that supports decentralisation with the autonomous individual as its base of support.

A spiritual perspective infuses Gandhiji's whole approach to life. His political understanding and practices, suggestions on the economy, social mobilisation and practical life have their basis in morality and ethics. Pursuit of Truth is his mantra and non-violence was integral to it.

Among Gandhiji's notable writings, mention may be made of *An Autobiography: The Story of my Experiments with Truth*; *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*; *Panchayat Raj*; *Satyagraha in South Africa*; *Sarvodaya* and *Hind Swaraj*. He edited *Young India* which he later renamed as *Harijan* which remained his mouthpiece.

As is true about anyone else, Gandhiji was also influenced by many: Tolstoy (*Gospels in Brief, What to Do, The Kingdom of God is Within You*), Ruskin (*Unto This Last*), Thoreau (*Essay on Civil Disobedience*), Swami Vivekananda, Gokhale and Tilak, just to mention a few. There is the strong stamp of his family and the Indian national movement with its cross-currents on him. He was familiar with the teachings of the major religions of the world. He was exceptionally well-read and even translated such works as *Plato's Republic* into Gujarati. He maintained extensive correspondence with some of the most outstanding figures of his time. He maintained a whipping schedule travelling to different parts of the vast Indian subcontinent sometimes traversing long distances on foot. Many associated themselves personally close to him and he left his imprint on many who came into contact with him. He learnt from everyone he came across and no significant event of his times escaped his attention. His assassination brought to a close a life of undaunted courage resting on the call of conscience, committed to the service of his country, common welfare and universal love.

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## 10.2 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Gandhiji was a deeply religious man. This perspective shaped his politics, his economic ideas and his view of society. However, the religious approach that he imbibed was markedly different from other religious men. He wrote to Mr. Polak, "Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise; I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart, a religious man. My bent is not political but religious."

He accepts the inner oneness of all existence in the cosmic spirit, and saw all living beings as representatives of the eternal divine reality. Divine presence envelops the whole world and it makes its reflective presence felt in men and women. Gandhiji believed that man's ultimate goal in life was self-realisation. Self-realisation, according to him, meant seeing God face to face, i.e., realising the absolute Truth or, what one may say, knowing oneself. He believed that it could not be achieved unless man identified himself with the whole of mankind. This necessarily involved participation in politics. Politics is the means, par excellence, to engage with the world. Such an engagement is expressed in service. Gandhiji was clear in his mind that Truth could not be attained by merely retiring to the Himalayas or being bogged down with rituals but in actively engaging with the world, keeping oneself open to the voice of God and critically reflecting upon oneself and letting others to reflect on you.

"Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His Creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, and so inert that I must concentrate myself on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity."

It is only through the means of self-purification that self-realisation can be attained. The fasts, prayers and works of service that he undertook were all directed towards such an end. In his Autobiography, Gandhiji says that self-realisation required self-purification as its ethical foundation. Man's moral life flows from such a search inward into his own self and expresses itself in outward activity of fellowship and concern to others. Gopinath Dhawan writes in this connection: "This ethical outlook is the backbone of Gandhiji's political philosophy even as his ethics has for its foundation in his metaphysical principles. To him the moral discipline of the individuals is the most important means of social reconstruction." Gandhiji invoked the five-fold moral principles: truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession and celibacy. The observance of these moral principles would purify man and enable him to strive after self-realisation.

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### 10.3 VIEWS ON HUMAN NATURE

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Gandhiji's views on man, human nature and society are in consonance with his philosophical outlook and reflect his convictions regarding morality and ethical pursuit of life. At the same time he was deeply aware of the imperfections of human beings. What is important, however, is the disposition: "There is no one without faults', not even men of God. They are men of God not because they are faultless but because they know their own faults .... and are ever ready to correct themselves." Conscious as Gandhiji was about man's weaknesses as an individual or a member of a group, he still did not think of man merely or only as a brute. Man, he was convinced, was after all a soul as well. Even the most brutal of men, he felt, cannot disown the spiritual element in them, i.e., their potentiality for goodness. While regarding the individual as imperfect, he had great faith in human nature. "I refuse", he says, "to suspect human nature. Its will is bound to respond to any noble and

friendly action". At another place, he says, "... There are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music." What distinguishes man from the brute is the self-conscious impulse to realise the divinity inherent in him. He writes: "We were born with brute strength but we were born in order to realise God who dwells in us. That indeed is the privilege of man and it distinguishes him from the brute creation." He argued that every man and woman has capacity in them to change their life and transform themselves truly into the self they are. "Man as animal," he says, "is violent, but as spirit (he) is non-violent. The moment he awakens to the spirit within he cannot remain violent."

Man is inherently predisposed towards his self-realisation. In him, moral qualities and social virtues such as love, cooperation, and tolerance preponderate over violence, selfishness and brutality, and man keeps working for higher life. He writes: "I believe that the sum total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up and that is the result of the definite, if unconscious, working of the law of nature".

Gandhiji believed that human nature is, in its essence, one and that everyman has the capacity for the highest possible development: "The soul is one in all; its possibility is, therefore, the same for everyone. It is this undoubted universal possibility that distinguishes the human from the rest of God's creation."

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## **10.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS**

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The modern world attempted to mark off religion from the political domain and made religion a purely personal affair. Religious beliefs and commitments by themselves are not supposed to shape the political realm. Against such a position Gandhiji called for the reinsertion of religion in shaping public life and saw an intimate relationship between the health of a polity and religious pursuits.

### **10.4.1 Concept of Religion**

What does religion stand for? How does one make sense of diversity of religions? Gandhiji's answer was, "I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world... they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another." There were, according to him, as many religions as there were minds. Each mind, he would say, had a different conception of God from that of the other. All the same they pursue the same God. He insisted that religion be differentiated from ethics. Fundamental ethical precepts are common across religions although religions may differ from each other with respect to their beliefs and practices. "I believe that fundamental ethics is common to all religions. ... By religion I have not in mind fundamental ethics but what goes by the name of denominationalism".

Religion enables us to pursue truth and righteousness. Sometimes he distinguished religion in general and religion in a specific sense. One belongs to a specific religion with its beliefs and practices. As one proceeds through the path suggested by it one also outgrows its limitations and comes to appreciate the common thread that binds all religions and pursuers of truth. Gandhiji once said: "Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the *religion* which transcends



Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself knows its maker and appreciates the true correspondence between the Maker and itself'. Any kind of sectarian foreclosure, he felt, was a violation of human nature and its authentic striving. He said, "Religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. It is not less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonises them and gives them reality". Talking about specific religions, he says, "Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals". While diversity of religions is admissible, he did not think that any religion can claim itself as superior over others. In fact, when a religion claims itself superior to others its credentials are suspect and it becomes a hurdle in the path of our self-realisation: "So long as there are different religions, every one of them may need some distinctive symbol. But when the symbol is made into a fetish and an instrument of proving the superiority of one's religion over others, it is fit only to be discarded'.

### 10.4.2 Concept of Politics

Politics, for Gandhiji, was but a part of man's life. Though he thought that an increase in the power of the state did the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lay at the root of all progress, yet he viewed political power as a means that enabled people to better their conditions in every department of life. Politics therefore is an enabling activity. He wrote, "my work of social reform was in no way less subordinate to political work. The fact is that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former".

Political activity of man is closely associated with other activities of man and all these activities, according to Gandhiji, influence each other. "Life is one indivisible whole, and all my activities run into one another". Therefore political activity is intimately related to other walks of life and pursuits. What he hated in politics was the concentration of power and the use of violence associated with political power.

### 10.4.3 Relationship between Religion and Politics

He formulated the relationship between politics and religion as an intimate one. Religion cannot be divorced from politics. Given the fundamental objective of life as self-realisation, if politics does not enable religious pursuits it is not worthwhile at all. He stated categorically, "For me, politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt, ever to be shunned". He further thought that political activity that divorces itself from the quest of self-realisation is not worth the salt. Politics creates the conditions for pursuits which members of a polity feel are basic to the making of their selves. What could be more basic than pursuit of one's own self? He felt, "For me there is no politics without religion – not the religion of the superstitious and the blind, religion that hates and fights, but the universal religion of toleration."

Politics is intimately related to the entire activities of human life. This is particularly true in

modern times. He wrote, "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments."

While regarding politics as the method through which men can rule themselves without violence and religion as the embodiment of ethical and moral rules, Gandhiji argued that their close relationship has to be recognised. So much importance did he attach to politics that he insisted on taking part in politics as if it is something religious in nature.

As evident, Gandhiji looked at politics with a view to reform it. He firmly believed that he could lead a truly religious life only when he took part in politics. But the motivation that imbues one in participation in public life is important.

The Gandhian view of politics was a politics where people participated in public affairs for purposes of serving others. Hence, for him, all political activities concerned themselves with the welfare of everyone. As political activity is closely related to the cause of the people it is essential that such activity be permeated by religion or at least should be the concern of the people who are religiously motivated. Politics permeated by religion, according to him, means politics dedicated to serve the cause of humanity which eventually leads to a better understanding of truth. For him, the kingdom of God lies here in this world, in the men here, and within men, those whose political activity is directed towards the service of humanity. To quote him, "I could not be leading a religious life, unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and I could not do so unless I took part in politics".

For Gandhiji, politics, is one method of seeking a part of the whole truth. Political activity helps man to achieve the capacity to rule himself, a capacity wherein he obeys rules of the society without any external force or external imposition. Religion and politics, so understood, make, a good case for swaraj. He regards concentration of power as detrimental to the individual freedom and initiative

Gandhiji never considered political power as an end; it was a means to enable people to better their condition in every walk of life. For him political power was a means to regulate public life at various levels in tune with the principles stated above. If the life of a polity becomes self-regulated, there was no need to have representative government. It will then be an enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone will be his own ruler respecting the self-rule of others over themselves. It would then be a completely non-violent society and state. He however felt that no society can ever become completely non-violent but if it does 'it would be the purest anarchy'. The latter is the ideal to strive for. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state.

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## 10.5 UNITY OF ENDS AND MEANS

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That the ends and means are related to each other is one of the basic tenets of Gandhian philosophy. Gandhiji drew no distinction between the means and the ends implying thereby that one leads to the other and that the latter is the effect of the former, Such an assertion, for him, approximates the scientific principle of the relationship between cause and effect. Gandhiji would not like to attain the noblest end if that was to be achieved through impure means.

## 10.5.1 Relationship between Means and Ends

He felt that the relationship between means and ends are integral and constitutive. "Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life". Refuting those who opined that 'means are after all means', he said, "means are after all everything". As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and ends. While good ends have to be cherished they are not in our control. But means are in our control. "Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realisation of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception." Therefore, "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."

He rebuked those who think that if one seeks good ends the morality of means can be left to themselves. For him, "Impure means result in impure end... One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach Truth".

He argued that means and ends are enmeshed into each other. "Are not Non-violence and Truth twins?" He replies, "The answer is an emphatic 'No'. Non-violence is embedded in Truth and *vice-versa*. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other."

Inspired by the *Gita*, the ethical principle that he upheld was *atmasakti*. One does not perform his duty expecting the fruit of his action and does it for the sake of duty. It sought detachment from the fruits of action. "By detachment I mean that you must not worry whether the desired result follows from your action or not, so long as your motive is pure, your means is correct. Really it means that things will come right in the end if you take care for the means and leave the rest to Him."

His approach to action was to be stated by him in categorical terms "I have... concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. I know if we can take care of them, attainment of the goal is assured. I feel too that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means.

This method may appear to be long, perhaps too long, but I am convinced that it is the shortest."

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## 10.6 SATYA, SATYAGRAHA AND AHIMSA

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Truth or Satya, for Gandhiji, is God himself. He therefore changed the statement, "God is Truth", later in his life into, "Truth is God" and suggested that it was one of the fundamental discoveries of his life's experiments. It is Truth, he says, that exists; what does not exist is untruth. The life of man, for Gandhiji, is a march of his pursuit in search of Truth or God.

According to Gandhiji, truth is what the inner self experiences at any point of time; it is an answer to one's conscience; it is what responds to one's moral self. He was convinced that knowledge alone leads a person to the truth while ignorance takes one away from the truth.

Satyagraha means urge for Satya, or truth. Satyagraha is not merely the insistence on truth;

it is, in fact, holding on to truth through ways which are moral and non-violent; it is not the imposition of one's will over others, but it is appealing to the reasoning of the opponent; it is not coercion but is persuasion.

Gandhiji highlights several attributes of satyagraha. It is a moral weapon and does not entertain ill-feeling towards the adversary; it is a non-violent device and calls upon its user to love his enemy; it does not weaken the opponent but strengthens him morally; it is a weapon of the brave and is constructive in its approach. For Gandhiji, a Satyagrahi is always truthful, morally imbued, non-violent and a person without any malice; he is one who is devoted to the service of all.

Truth, he firmly believed, can be attained only through non-violence which was not negative, meaning absence of violence, but was positively defined by him as love. Resort to non-violence is recourse to love. In its positive sense, non-violence means love for others; in its negative sense, it seeks no injury to others, both in words as well as deeds. Gandhiji talked of non-violence of different people. There is the non-violence of the brave: one has the force but he does not use it as a principle; there is the non-violence of the weak: one does not have faith in non-violence, but he uses it for attaining his objectives; there is the non-violence of the coward: it is not non-violence, but impotency, more harmful than violence. For Gandhiji, violence was a better option than cowardice.

Through non-violence one appeals to the truth that nestles in people and makes the latter realise it in themselves, come around, and join hands in the common march to truth along with those whom they earlier considered as their adversaries. Given the enmeshing of means and ends, Gandhiji, often saw Love, Truth, God and Non-violence as interchangeable terms. Truth or God or Self-realisation being man's ultimate goal in life, this goal can be attained only through non-violence or ahimsa.

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## 10.7 CONCEPT OF SWARAJ

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Gandhiji's concept of Swaraj was not merely confined to freeing India from the British yoke. Such freedom he desired but he said that he did not want to exchange 'king log for king stork'. Swaraj is not transfer of political power to the Indians. Nor does it mean, as he emphasised, mere political self-determination. For him, there was no Swaraj in Europe; for him the movement of Swaraj involved primarily the process of releasing oneself from all the bondages one is prey to both internal and external. It involves a movement of self-purification too. It is not the replacement of one type of authority by another. He felt, "the real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused". Swaraj, he used to say, is power of the people to determine their lot by their own efforts and shape their destiny the way they like. In other words, "Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".

Swaraj is usually translated in English as 'Independence'. Gandhiji, however, gave this term a much deeper meaning. "The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means". He saw swaraj as freedom for all plus self-control by all. It is related to the inner strength

and capacity of a people which enable them to understand and control their social world: "The outward freedom that we shall attain will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment. And if this is the correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated upon achieving reform from within".

Freedom from within means control over oneself, which, in turn, means a life based on understanding one's own self. Gandhi perceived non-violence as the key to attain such freedom and self-control. Non-violence needs to be imbued in our thought, words and deeds. Once non-violence as love takes possession of these dimensions of the person then a sense of duty prevails over those of rights. We tend to do things for others without expecting returns thereon. "In Swaraj based on Ahimsa, people need not know their rights, but it is necessary for them to know their duties. There is no duty that does not create corresponding rights and those rights alone are genuine rights, which flow from the performance of duty.

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Swaraj is thus a basic need of all. It recognises no race, religion, or community. "Nor is it the monopoly of the lettered persons..... Swaraj is to be for all, including the former but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving, toiling millions. A stout hearted, honest, sane, literate man may well be the first servant of the nation." Swaraj will necessarily be inclusive of the poor and the toiling masses. Therefore, he adds, "Let there be no mistake as what Purna Swaraj means. .... It is full economic freedom for the toiling millions. It is no unholy alliance with any interest for their exploitation. Any alliance must mean their deliverance." (Young *India*, 16.4.1931, p.77). In the same vein, Gandhiji made it very clear that India's Swaraj did not mean the rule of majority community i.e. Hindus. 'Every community would be at par with every other under the Swaraj constitution.'

Swaraj, implying government based on the consent of the people is not a gift which comes from above, but it is something that comes from within. Democracy, therefore, is not the exercise of the voting power, holding public office, criticising government; nor does it mean equality, liberty or security, though important as they all are in a democratic polity. It is when the people are able to develop their inner freedom which is people's capacity to regulate and control their desires/impulses in the light of reason that freedom rises from the individual and strengthens him.

His Swaraj had economic, social, political and international connotations. Economic Swaraj, as he says himself, "stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life." Social Swaraj centres on "an equalisation of status." Political Swaraj aims at "enabling people to better their condition in every department of life." In the international field, swaraj emphasised on interdependence. "There is", he says, "No limit to extending our services to our neighbours across state-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers."

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## 10.8 ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

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Gandhiji did not subscribe to the view that democracy meant the rule of the majority. He gave several definitions of democracy on several occasions. When we put them together, Gandhiji may say, "Democracy must in essence... mean the art and science of mobilising the

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entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in service of the common good of all." He further said, "true democracy or the **Swaraj** of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make the individual freedom. **Individual** freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated **Ahimsa**."

Democracy is a reflective and deliberative activity marking the presence of **everyone**. "In true democracy every man and woman is taught to think for himself or herself. **How** this real revolution can be brought about I do not know except that every reform, like charity must begin at home." Democracy extends consideration to the viewpoints of others as it expects consideration to one's own viewpoint. "The golden rule of conduct (in a democracy), he said, "is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all **think** alike and that **we** shall always see Truth in fragments and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody—else's **freedom** of conscience."

Gandhiji was wedded to adult suffrage. He felt that it is the only way to safeguard the interests of all: the minorities, the poor, the dalits, the peasants and women. He **hoped** that the voters give weight to the qualifications of the candidates, not their caste, community, or party affiliation. He wanted men of character to **enter** legislatures for even if they commit mistakes they would never do anything against the interests of the voters. Men and women without character elected by the people would destroy the democratic system.

Referring to parliamentary democracy in 1931, Gandhi envisaged a constitution of **independent** India "which will release India from all thralldom and patronage, and give her, if need be, the right to **sin**". He laid down his vision of an independent India as follows: "I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose **making** they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. **There** can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability, or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy **same** rights as men. Since we shall be at peace **with** all the rest of the world, neither exploiting nor being exploited. We shall have the smallest army imaginable, All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected whether foreign or indigenous. Personally, I hate distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams. ... I shall be satisfied with nothing less."

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## **10.9 GRAM SWARAJ OR DEVELOPMENT FROM BELOW**

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According to the Gandhian thinking, democracy can function smoothly and according to the concept of **swaraj** only if it is decentralised. "Centralisation as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society". He wanted the centre of power to **move** from cities to villages.

While **conceptualising** the decentralised system of rule, Gandhi advanced his theory of Oceanic Circle, which he explained in the following words:

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be **ever-** widening never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose **centre** will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes a life **composed** of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the **outermost** circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. Gandhi defended such a position even at the cost of being called a utopian. "I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has **an-imperishable** value, my picture has **its** own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realisable in its completeness".

The building blocks of democracy have to be villages. **Gandhiji** wanted each village to have an annually elected Panchayat to manage the affairs of the village. Each village following the oceanic circle theory would be autonomous yet interdependent. As Gandhiji argued, "My idea of village **swaraj** is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity".

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## **10.10 IDEAS ON THE ECONOMY**

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**Gandhiji's** political philosophical ideas came to shape his ideas on the economy centrally. His economic thought revolves around the following normative ideas: (i) Economic process must work towards equality and non-exploitation (ii) it must be consistent with full employment (iii) it must provide **low** priced consumer goods which satisfy the needs of the people (iv) all those industries with sophisticated technology must be in the public sector (v) no mass production without equal distribution.

For Gandhiji, the two cardinal principles in his economic thought are the promotion of equality together with social justice. For the purpose the three principles which he prescribed are: (a) of non-possession **i.e.** economic policies to be pursued on need-base and not on the **want-**base (b) inequality arises with irrational desires to have more than what one wants (c) in technologically advanced countries, people do not consume goods in the same proportion they produce; labour-intense technologies are to be preferred to the capital-intensive ones.

Gandhiji's economics stressed on equality, social justice, full employment and harmonious labour-capital relations. The last two centuries produced a good number of social thinkers and scientists. **Mam** offered an alternative to the capitalistic system articulated by Adam Smith. He called it communism. In between capitalism and communism stood socialism. Capitalism gave rise to colonialism and exploitation of the poor against which Gandhi fought all through his **life**. But he opposed capitalism as much as communism. For him the individual, his freedom, dignity and satisfying life were more important than mere economic progress, which both capitalism and communism promised to deliver, Anything that did not liberate the man was unacceptable to Gandhi.

Morality and ethics occupy a central place in Gandhian concept of economics. "True economics never mitigates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must. An economics that inculcates Mammon worship and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all, equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life."

In Gandhian economics, the supreme consideration is the human being. Every man has the right to live and, therefore, to find work to meet his basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, education, health and self-esteem. He felt, 'these should be freely available to all as God's air and water are ought to be. They should not be made a vehicle of traffic for exploitation of others. Their monopolisation by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust'.

He argued that we must utilise all human labour before we entertain the idea of employing mechanical power. "Real planning", according to Gandhi, "consists in the best utilisation of the whole man-power of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and re-buying finished articles at fabulous prices."

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## 10.11 SARVODAYA: THE RISE OF ALL

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Gandhiji was critical of the path both capitalist and socialist economies had taken, America harbours massive poverty amidst abundant wealth. "America is the most industrialised country in the world, and yet it has not banished poverty and degradation. That is because it neglects the universal manpower and concentrates power in the hands of the few who amass fortunes at the expense of the many." Socialist economies, he felt, put the cart before the horse: "As I look at Russia where the apotheosis of industrialisation has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me. To use the language of the Bible, 'what shall it avail a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full blooded, fully developed member of the society."

While he looked at socialism positively, he felt that it was deeply enmeshed in violence "Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism is explicit in the first verse of *Ishopanishad*. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. ... I accepted the theory of socialism even while I was in South Africa. My opposition to socialists and others consists in attacking violence as a means of affecting any lasting reform." Further, socialism has only one aim that is material progress. "I want freedom for full expression of my personality. ... Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body." (*Harijan*, 4.8.1946)

Against capitalism and socialism, Gandhi proposed the concept of Sarvodaya, which was based on three basic principles:

1. that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all;



2. that the lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work;
3. that a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

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## 10.12 THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

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One of the most original contributions of Gandhiji in the area of economics is the concept of trusteeship. Gandhiji wanted complete equality in so far as the basic needs of the people were concerned. In fact he wanted the basic needs of all including animals to be met satisfactorily. But at the same time, he wanted people to have incentives to remain economically **active** and produce more. This naturally would lead to some people having more than what they need. They would be rich but there would be no poor because the basic needs of all would be satisfied.

To ensure that those who were rich did not use their property for selfish purposes or to control others, he derived the term "Trusteeship". Explaining the meaning underlying this term he said, 'Everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore, it was meant for His people as a whole, not for particular individuals. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became trustee of that portion for God's people'.

He wished that the idea of trusteeship becomes a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserve. In these distinctions he found the seeds of war and conflict.

He elaborated on his idea of trusteeship extensively. He suggested "as to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to the legal sanction."

The idea underlying the concept of trusteeship was twofold:

1. All humans are born equal and hence have a right to equal opportunity. This means that all must have their basic needs fully satisfied.
2. All humans, however, are not endowed with equal intellectual and physical capacity. Some would have greater capacity to produce than others. Such persons must treat themselves as trustees of the produce beyond their basic needs.
3. Violence and force as modes of distribution of produce have to be rejected,

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## 10.13 EVILS OF INDUSTRIALISM

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Gandhiji was against industrialisation on a mass scale because it leads to many insoluble problems such as the exploitation of the villagers, urbanisation, environmental pollution etc. He wanted manufacturing to be done in villages and by the villages. This would keep the majority of the people of India fully employed; they would be able to meet their basic needs and would remain self-reliant. Even modern machines could be used provided they did not lead to unemployment and become the means of exploitation.

Gandhiji considered the prevailing industrialisation as a disease. 'Let us not be deceived by catchwords and phrases', he admonished. Modern machines 'are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race.' He was not against machinery as such; he was against industrialism, i.e. industrial and mechanical mentality. "Industrialisation is, I am afraid, going to be curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit ... India, when it begins to exploit other nations - as it must if it becomes industrialised - will be a curse for other nations, a menace for the world".

It is because of this perspective that Gandhi suggested the boycott of mill made cloth and manufacture of handmade cloth in each and every household particularly in the rural areas. The efforts he made to promote Khadi were just a beginning of the movement he wanted to launch to promote village industries in general. One must see Gandhiji's concept of basic education (nai taleem) in relation to his movement for village industries.

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## 10.14 CONCEPT OF SWADESHI

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Swaraj as we would see later does not mean just political freedom. Gandhi ascribed a far deeper meaning to this term. It means self-control to begin with. Swaraj and Swadeshi go together. Swadeshi is 'that spirit in us which restricts us to use the services of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote'.. "Much of the deep poverty of the masses", he felt, "is due to the ruinous departure from swadeshi in the economic and industrial life." Swadeshi will not merely reinforce autonomous local units but also build cooperative relations with others with whom they need to associate. 'If we follow the swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find our neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them..... Then every village of India will almost be self-supporting and self-contained unit exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible".

Swadeshi and self-sufficiency go together. The former is possible only if the latter is accepted as a matter of principle. Each individual, each family, each village and each region would be economically self-reliant, "Self-sufficiency does not mean narrowness; to be self-sufficient is not to be altogether self-contained. In no circumstances would we be able to produce all the things we need. So though our aim is complete self-sufficiency, we shall have to get from outside the village what we cannot produce in the village; we shall have to produce more of what we can in order thereby to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce".

There are two other concepts, which go together with Swadeshi: they are Decentralisation and Cooperation. "Interdependence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency. Man is a social being. Without inter-relation with society he cannot realise his oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism... If man were so placed or could so place himself as to be absolutely above all dependence on his fellow-beings, he would become so proud and arrogant, as to be veritable burden and nuisance to the world. Dependence on society teaches him the lesson to humility". He felt that the value of self-sufficiency central to swadeshi has its limits. 'Self Sufficiency too has a limit. Drops in separation could only fade away; drops in cooperation made the ocean which carried on its broad bosom greyhounds".

The concept of Swadeshi, for Gandhi, is encompassing. In religion, it means to be faithful to our ancestral religion; in politics, it means the use of indigenous institutions; in economics, it emphasised on the use of things produced in the immediate neighbourhood; one must prefer locally produced things even if they are of relatively inferior quality or costly. It does not mean that one should hate foreign-made products. Gandhiji had a place for foreign-made goods, especially medicines and life-saving drugs if they are not produced in the country.

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## 10.15 SUMMARY

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There is a remarkable consistency and continuity in the political ideas of Gandhiji and the uses he put them to. Gandhi considered man as embodying the spiritual principle in him which is divine. His self-realisation is the prime task of every man and woman. While man is not perfect and desires and mundane interests constantly pitch themselves as his prime wants, he has an innate disposition to seek his spiritual realisation. If the spiritual nature of man has to be privileged then man's priorities have been to be ordered accordingly. He therefore bitterly criticised modernity and its insinuations which confine man to this world and its allurements. He argued that the divine nature of man makes religion to engage itself positively with the world. He did not agree that religion should be separated from politics. He thought that politics offers great opportunities to serve others and such service is an essential attribute of religion. While Gandhi believed in his own religion and thought highly of it, he had equal respect for all other religions, considered all of them as true but not without shortcomings. He considered that ends and means are integral to each other. He did not subscribe to the idea that good ends justify appropriate means. He applied this principle to the pursuit of truth as well, which he considered as God himself. Truth as end and non-violence as means are inseparable.

While Gandhiji appreciated the need of power in the absence a fully self-regulated and self-directed order, which he called swaraj, he did not consider political power as an end; it was only a means to serve the people, especially the poor. Its primary purpose is to enable people to be themselves and to establish the conducive conditions for the purpose. He was the votary of swaraj which meant more than political freedom. Swaraj to him meant self-control. A person who can control his thoughts, words and actions is well-disposed to self-realisation. If all are imbued with swaraj individually and collectively, an ideal society would become a reality,

He saw democracy as an art and science of mobilising the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all the various sections of the people in service of the common good of all. It cannot come about by untruth and violence.

Gandhi considered capitalism, communism and socialism as socio-political systems that do not recognise adequately the freedom, equality and dignity of the individual. Their priorities remain lop-sided. He advocated the principle of sarvodaya – the rise of all – which ensures basic needs of all and extends equal consideration to all.

Gandhi rejected the concept of *Homo economicus* on which modern economics and civilisation is based. Gandhian economics focuses on meeting the basic needs of all through self-employment. This is possible only if the wants are minimised and they are placed in perspective

with the essential striving of man. Gandhi believed that trusteeship ensures **creativity** and initiative, ensures freedom while at the same time ensuring equal distribution of goods. Gandhi stood for village based decentralised system of governance. He wanted to see villages as self-governing republics with maximum autonomy but at the same time cooperating and interdependent upon one another. He defended swadeshi wherein all the basic needs of citizens can be met locally. Gandhiji not only encountered strong opposition to his ideas but also received support in ample measure. But these consequences did not deter him from holding fast to his ideas and formulate his practices accordingly.

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## **10.16 EXERCISES**

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1. Explain briefly the philosophical foundations of Gandhiji's political philosophy.
2. List the special features of Gandhian economics.
3. Highlight the Gandhian concepts of economic equality and swadeshi.
4. Discuss Gandhiji's views on religion and its relationship with politics.
5. Comment on Gandhi's views on the End-Means unity.
6. Discuss Gandhiji's views on truth and non-violence.
7. Explain the uses of power according to Mahatma Gandhi.
8. Discuss Gandhiji's ideas of parliamentary democracy.
9. Do the present day village panchayats meet the requirements of Gram Swaraj?

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# UNIT 11 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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## Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Nehru's Scientific Temper
  - 11.2.1 Science and Religion
  - 11.2.2 Scientific Humanism
- 11.3 Nehru's Theory of Culture
- 11.4 Political Ideas of Nehru
  - 11.4.1 On Nationalism
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  - 11.4.4 On Parliamentary Democracy
- 11.5 Nehru on Socialism
- 11.6 Nehru's International Outlook
- 11.7 Summary
- 11.8 Exercises

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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The contribution of Jawaharlal Nehru is rightly acclaimed as the maker of modern India. Having faith in the Indian people, he sought to build a democratic polity, an economically modernised nation and a country whose role in the community of nations he perceived clearly. He was both a philosopher as well as a practical political leader. He did learn the western style of living and life, and to that extent he did imbibe in himself the western culture and western democratic thought with a clear tilt towards a near-communist thinking, yet, in his latter years, he acquired, as Michael Brecher said (*Nehru: A Political Biography*), "a deeper appreciation of Indian history and philosophy and enriched the basis for subsequent thought and action." He was influenced by the developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as he found them in the world, but at no point of time, he closed his eyes from the ground realities of the country he belonged. Though he belonged to life of comforts and luxuries, he remained a man of masses.

Jawaharlal Nehru (henceforth, Nehru) was born in 1889. He received education at his home in Allahabad and at Harrow and Cambridge. During his seven years stay in England, he imbibed the traditions of British humanist liberation, subscribing largely to ethos propagated by Mill, Gladstone and Morley. Among those whose ideas influenced Nehru were George Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell. He was not a political philosopher like Hobbes, Rousseau, or Marx, but he was certainly a man of ideas as also of action.

Nehru was one of the indomitable fighters of Indian freedom who led the Congress movement

(under Gandhiji's leadership) alongwith a host of ,other leaders such as Vallabhai Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Rajendra Prasad, to mention a few. He led the interim government in 1946 and became the first Prime Minister of the independent India and occupied this position till his death in 1964. During the period of national movement, Nehru suffered imprisonment many a times and had presided over the Congress a couple of times. He was the Congress President in 1929 when it adopted the historic resolution of 'Purna Swaraj'.

Nehru authored *Glimpses of World History*, *Autobiography* and *The Discovery of India*.

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## 11.2 NEHRU'S SCIENTIFIC TEMPER

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Nehru was basically a scientist in his approach. In fact, he was the first amongst the nationalist leaders who did recognise the importance of science and technology for the modernisation of the Indian society. For a modern educated Indian and this is true as well, Nehru represented the desire to be modern and scientific in one's outlook. To Nehru, Science constituted the very essence of life, without which, he would say, the modern world would have found it difficult to survive. Science, being the dominant factor in modern life, Nehru asserts, must guide the social system and economic structure. Emphasising the achievements of science which include mighty and fundamental changes in numerous fields, what is the most important of all changes is the development of the scientific outlook in man. Together with the scientific method, the new outlook of man alone could offer to mankind hope and expectation of a good life and an ending of the agony of the world, Nehru argued. He was aware of the difficulties inherited "in nurturing science and technology in a society where thought processes were governed by traditional mores." He was never tired of speaking about the scientific temper or fighting irrationality (See R.C. Pillai, Nehru and *His Critics*, p. 29)

Addressing the Indian Science Congress in late thirties, Nehru stated: "Politics led me to economics and this led me inevitably to science, and the scientific approach to all our problems and to life itself. It was science alone that could solve these problems of hunger and poverty, of insanitation and literacy, of superstition and deadening custom and tradition, of vast resources running to waste, of a rich country inhabited by starving people."

Like his father, Nehru was an agnostic. Nehru had never been able to absorb the religious devoutness of his mother. In spite of his over thirty years' contact with Gandhiji whose prophetic personality impressed everyone, Nehru continued and in fact, remained agnostic. He was not a dogmatic or militant atheist, but he was not a spiritualist either. He writes: "Often, often as I look at this world, I have a sense of mysteries, of unknown depths. What the mysterious is I do not know. I do not call it God because God has come to mean much that I do not believe in ..." But what he could call spiritual, the term that he used often, was nothing but one that we subscribe to 'moral' or 'ethical' and Nehru was, only in that narrow sense, religious; religious in the framework of science. Science was Nehru's mantra: "science as the way of observation and precise knowledge and deliberate reasoning".

### 11.2.1 Science and Religion

Nehru's scientific temper did not permit him to be dogmatic. He had, therefore, no attraction

for any religion, for he saw nothing more than superstition and dogmatism in the religion, in any religion. Behind every religion, Nehru argued, lay a method of approach which was wholly unscientific. But he did recognise that religion does provide some kind of a satisfaction to the inner needs of human nature and give a set of moral and ethical values of life in general. Religion was acceptable to Nehru only to that limited extent. He was not a religious man, nor would he ever spend time, as a routine, for morning and evening worshipping. Science was much preferable to religion, Nehru used to argue and continued.

As Nehru had scientific temper, it was natural that he would be a secularist. V.P. Varma (*Modern Indian Political Thought*) writes, "But for a person (Jawaharlal Nehru, for example) who is an agnostic, materialist or atheist, it is easy to adopt a secularist attitude." "Jawaharlal was", he continues, "an agnostic and was not emotionally involved in religious disputations."

Secularism is basically the separation of religion from politics. Politics is associated with public activities. Religion is an individual affair, giving everyone the right to practise one's own religion. Referring to the concept of secularism, Nehru says "Some people think that it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities; that as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion, which then becomes the state religion." As a part of religious community anyone can share any belief. People observe their religious festivals, rituals and customs. But at the same time, if anybody wants to come out of this belief system, he has a right to do so. If somebody is an atheist, he is free not to have any faith. State is not going to interfere in somebody's belief system.

Nehru did not take religion in a narrow sense: religion does not teach hatred and intolerance; all religions speak the truth; that is the essence of each religion. He was of the view that the religious basis of politics does not help social progress. At the same time, Nehru had respect for Gandhi's view on the role of religion in politics. He was of the opinion that Gandhi had a moral view of politics. For Gandhi, religion can teach the politicians to be moral and ethical; it has a role in a society for teaching moral values and maintaining an ethical order. To that extent, Nehru was one with Gandhi. But at the same time he opposed the view that political parties should be organised on the basis of religion. That created hatred between different religions and hatred breeds violence and intolerance among people. He agreed to the point that religious equality can be the basis of creating a peaceful and harmonious society. Without social peace, no social progress is possible. Changing the religion of a group can create social disharmony; though he theoretically agreed to this point of view, he did not support it politically.

Nehru was a secularist. He disapproved both the Hindu communalism as well as the Muslim communalism. His loyalty to secularism has been a great relief to the minority group in India. His belief in scientific methodology with its stress on rationalism has helped the evolution of his nationalist political ideology.

### **11.2.2 Scientific Humanism**

It is not easy to declare Nehru irreligious; he was, in fact, not opposed to religion. He did recognise that religion 'supplied a deep craving of human beings'. He did admit that religion served a significant human purpose as "the resting ground for 'faith' and 'faith in

progress, in a sense, in ideals, in human goodness and human destiny" (see Nehru, *An Autobiography*). According to Nehru, it was from 'faith' that 'the inner imaginative urges' which distinguished man from other beings, flowed, and it was to these urges that the ends of a life bore reference. Science too, Nehru says, suggested the existence of the inner world of spirit, but the latter was beyond the reach of science, for his understanding of science was that it explained the 'How's' of the existence but left the 'why's' of it alone'. Obviously then, man had to turn inwards to his intuition to see the world of spirit. Thus, between science and intuition, the role was clear: science could help refine one's senses; intuition could help understand the spiritual world. The only adequate philosophy of life, 'the integral vision of life', as Nehru called it, was, the one that had the 'temper and approach of science allied to the philosophy and with reverence for all that lies beyond'. "It was", as Nehru had said, "philosophy which explained the matter of existence while science explained the manner of it." (See, Nehru, *The Discovery of India*). So, Nehru concludes: "Lest the approach of life grew lopsided, with either the outerself or the innerself, and not both as combined when as the whole life, reconciling of the scientific with the spirit of philosophy was necessary for 'balancing of an individual's outer and inner life.'" (See M.N. JHA, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut.) Nehru, thus, adds the environmental dimension to Gandhi's worldview on the one hand, and though he drifts away from Gandhi, he aligns himself with him on the other. Though he got influenced by Marx's scientific approach, he alienated himself from him for his hostility to the spirit of man. To that extent Nehru combines the scientific aspect of the Marx and the spiritualist aspect of Gandhi, especially in his scientific humanism. Scientific humanism forms the basic content of Nehru's view of human relationship.

Nehru's scientific humanism had the combination of scientific dimension as well as the spiritual dimension. Unlike Gandhi's uni-dimensional approach, there is a bi-dimensional approach in Nehru. According to Nehru, "the way to the spiritualisation of human relationships lay through that of the circumstances **envi**roning them". Nehru himself admitted that it was in the interest of man to have **faith** in the essential spirituality of manhood, but he emphasised that faith was merely the concluding end of the rationalist process. He was of the opinion that man would never have faith in the spirituality of the human being unless circumstances **envi**roning him compelled it. He asserted that the way to the spiritualisation of the social progresses lay through the objectivisation of the spirit of man alone and to the realisation of the social processes lay through the objectivisation of the spirit of man alone, and to the realisation of it.

The key to man's problems lies, as Nehru believed, if people tried to imbibe in themselves the highest ideals, such as **humanism** and scientific spirit. He did not see any conflict between the two: "there is a growing synthesis between humanism and scientific spirit, resulting in the kind of scientific humanism". He writes: "the modern mind, that is to say, the better type of the modern type, is practical and pragmatic ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment. It has discarded to a **large extent** the philosophic approach of the ancients, their search for ultimate reality as well as the **devotionalism** and **mysticism** of the medieval period. Humanity is its god and social service, its religion".

Endowed with a scientific and rational temper, Nehru always looked upon science as an effective means for the liberation of man.



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## 11.3 NEHRU'S THEORY OF CULTURE

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As an active politician and an author with sociological realism and political pragmatism, Nehru would hardly subscribe to the concept of culture as an organic unity permeated with some primordial systems. Nehru could never entertain such a perspective of India's structural cultural continuity, but he did appreciate the vicissitudes of India's historical transformations from the days of the ancient Harappan civilisation to the contemporary one. He was not the man who would acknowledge the revelation of God or Dharma in the Indian cultural manifestations. Nehru is a naturalist determinist who upholds physical, geological, zoological, chemical and anthropological data, but sees no spiritual governance of the cosmic process. So with Nehru's historiography, there are no providential dispensation and no emotional attachment to any specific culture.

Though Nehru was a Brahmin, he did not attach any meaning to ritualism; he did admire the Gita gospel of dedicated disinterested altruism, and was never thrilled by the exalted orations of the Visvarupa of the Gita's eleventh chapter. He was more influenced by Russell and Lenin than by the notion of Nirvana. The external materialistic attempts of the Western-Soviet worlds fascinated Nehru more than the Puranic cosmography of the oriental world. That does not mean that Nehru was all Marxist-Leninist. He did know the strength of Marxism – Leninism, but he also knew that it was weak in domains relating to humanist values, when it ignored the positive aspects of capitalistic system, and also when it came to dwell solely on materialistic factors. Nehru was a blend of the two extremes: the external civilisational advancement together with a quest for the realisation of values in all spheres of human activities. Professor Varma holds the view: "Towards the latter part of his life, Jawaharlal would have agreed that materialistic dialectics and class polarity cannot be adequate tools for understanding the widespread ramifications of alienation." "Values", he continues, "in turn, lose their significance if they are solely regarded as class ideological responses."

Nehru's concept of culture was not spiritual, but material; it was not eternal, but humanist; it was, more or less, this worldly, historical and to that extent a blend of secular and temporal, social and economic values. His culture was not dogmatic, fundamentalist, fanatical, narrow, prophetic, angological, divine and godly. It was one that was an apostle of compassion, altruism, humanism and one which was more close to liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights, and rationalistic. Speaking about the concept of culture, Professor Varma says, "Cultural comprehensiveness requires an emancipated mind liberated from the shackles of dogmatic and revealed theology, the renunciation of unjust demands for the retention of unfounded socio-economic vestiges and the abjuration of all claims to impose one's limited conceptions of ethics, justice and social norms on others professing loyalty to divergent creeds and religious tenets." About Nehru's culture, Professor Varma concluded, "Jawaharlal and some other top spokesmen of Gandhian values found it easy to reconcile democratic liberalism with social toleration and cultural pluralism because they had genuine commitment to the demands of patriotism oriented towards cosmopolitan fulfilment. Jawaharlal was sincere in his advocacy of secularism as a political and cultural value,"

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## 11.4 POLITICAL IDEAS OF NEHRU

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### 11.4.1 On Nationalism

Nehru was a great nationalist, though he had no theory of nationalism. He did believe in the objectivity of the fundamental unity of India nurtured on cultural foundations which was, according to him, "not religious in the narrow sense of the term. He did accept the narrow diversities, but, at the same time, he admired the unity running throughout the Indian history. He was, indeed, inspired by the concept of cultural pluralism and synthesis. To him, nationalism was a noble phase of self-magnification. He writes: "Nationalism is essentially a group memory of past achievements, traditions, and experiences, and nationalism is stronger today than it has ever been .... Wherever a crisis has arisen, nationalism has emerged again and dominated the scene, and people have sought comfort and strength in their old traditions. One of the remarkable developments of the present age has been the rediscovery of the past and/or the nation." But nationalism has also solid – social, political and economic – foundations.

By nature, Nehru was a nationalist and was a rebel against authoritarianism. He did not like the politics of talks, of too much submission and appeal to authorities and that was why he always found himself akin to Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He says: "So far as political matters were concerned, I was, if I may say so, an Indian nationalist desiring India's freedom, and rather, inclined, in the context of Indian politics to the more extreme wing of it, as represented then by Mr. Tilak." But he was in the way in agreement with Tilak's, deep religious motivations.

Nehru's nationalism had its clear distinctive features. It was a composite and a living force and as such could make the strongest appeal to the spirit of man. Only such a type of socialism could be a driving force for freedom, and it alone could give a certain degree of unity, vigour and vitality to many people all over the world. But Nehru did not appreciate the narrow and fanatical type of nationalism. R.C. Pillai writes about Nehru's views on narrow nationalism: "Nationalism would be harmful, if it ever made the people conscious of their own superiority. It would be most undesirable if the spirit of nationalism pushed up any people towards aggressive expansionism," Nehru himself says of the Indian nationalism as liberal and tolerant: "Nationalism is essentially an anti-feeling and it feeds and fattens on hatred and anger against other national groups..."

Translated into action, Nehru's nationalism was patriotism and independence of the country. In fact, Nehru's nationalism was a firm commitment to the idea of complete independence of the country. In his sharply worded rejoinder to all those who still advocated dominion states, Nehru most emphatically stated, way back in 1928, "If India has a message to give to the world, it is clear that she can do so more effectively as an independent country than as a member of the British group." And in 1928, he presided over the Lahore Congress session and got the Purna Swaraj resolution passed.

### 11.4.2 On Democracy

Nehru was a great champion of democracy. Throughout his life, he laid emphasis on the importance of democracy and desired passionately that independent India would go along the full democratic process. He had a great passion for freedom. Grown in the Western democratic

traditions, Nehru absorbed, since childhood, many of the dominant concepts of modern democratic thought. He had read extensively philosophers such as Rousseau, Montesquieu, Mill and made reference of their works in the writings. He conferred and wrote in his *An Autobiography*, "My roots are still perhaps partly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely".

For Nehru, democracy was an intellectual condition, it was primarily a way of life, based on the hypothesis that the freedom was integral to the being of man. He was also aware that freedom required a set of conditions. He writes: "Self-discipline, tolerance, and a taste of peace – these were the basic conditions for living a life of freedom". He did not subscribe to the view that unrestrained freedom made any sense. He held, M.N. Jha says, "that the state was born to make a reality of the freedom of its citizens, for, it served to counteract the evil influences of the lower instincts of the individual man in the social process." The state, Nehru held, was a spiritual necessity for man to clear the particularistic convictions that the religions promote.

Nehru was a true democrat, for he never doubted the soundness of democracy as a spiritual proposition. In his view, the spiritualisation of a social process was, "synonymous with the maximisation of democracy within it, and the latter called for the objectivisation of not merely the guarantees of rights but also of rights themselves."

Nehru's concept of democracy had specific implications. In the early years of liberation struggle, democracy, for Nehru, meant the ideal of self-rule or responsible government. Later, with the socialist ideas altering his world-view, he came to see democracy as one that emphasised an equality of opportunity to all in the economic and political field and freedom for the individual to grow and develop to the best of his personality.

### 11.4.3 Individual Freedom and Equality

Nehru was a democrat by nature, temperament and conviction; he held individual freedom and equality as important components of any democratic polity. According to Nehru, the creative spirit of man could grow only in an atmosphere of freedom. To promote and preserve the values of human life, both society and individual must enjoy freedom. The purpose of a democratic society, Nehru held, was essentially to provide necessary conditions of creative development. Why must India accept the democracy process? Nehru gave the following reason.

"It is not enough for us merely to produce the material goods of the world. We do want high standard of living, but not at the cost of man's creative spirit, his creative energy, his spirit of adventure, not at the cost of all fine things of life which have ennobled man throughout the ages. Democracy is not merely a question of elections."

Nehru believed in the primacy and autonomy of the individual; the state had no right to suppress the individual, no development could be attained if man's creative abilities were to remain suppressed. Nehru's concept of individual freedom necessarily implied freedom of speech, and expression, of association, of many other fields of human activities. The general health of a society, Nehru believed, was largely determined by the freedom of its people.

In Nehru's democratic thought, equality constituted an important component of his concept of democracy. "The spirit of the age is in favour of equality ..." Nehru declared. The doctrine of equality, according to Nehru, meant equal opportunities for all; it presupposed a certain faith in and respect for humanity as a whole, and a belief that the progress and well-being of individuals, groups, or races mainly depended upon the enjoyment of equal opportunities by all, with more opportunities to the weaker sections of society.

#### **11.4.4 On Parliamentary Democracy**

Indian cultural traditions and historical experience under the British rule helped Nehru to support the parliamentary democracy instead of Presidential system of the USA. Parliamentary democracy is much more flexible to accommodate diverse social groups. No social group is allowed to go out of the system as the system is ready to bear the agitation organised by such a group to a point. Even Nehru did not agree to the demands of such groups but accommodated their demands in a democratic process. Once the system accepts the demands, the agitation fritters away. For instance, the states' reorganisation on the basis of language is a classic case. There was agitation by Telugu people for the separation of Andhra from Madras Presidency; Nehru as the Prime Minister accepted the demand by constituting a Committee of Reorganisation of States on the basis of language with some reservation. This is the spirit of a democratic leader. Very often the leader may not agree to the point theoretically but accepts it as the best policy for creating a healthy system. Once the states are reorganised on the basis of language, the Indian democracy functions as a federation; though in the Constitution it is written as a union of states, in practice it functions as a federation. Federation helps in building an institutional framework for nurturing the cultural identities of a linguistic group. In the Indian Constitution there is a distribution of powers between the centre and the states. Legal and institutional arrangements hold the key to democracy, while linguistic federalism provides the flesh to the skeleton democracy. This political arrangement has been working for fifty years without creating problems of unmanageable magnitude, though there are problems for the Indian Federation from the peripheral states.

Parliamentary democracy supports cabinet form of executive that can accommodate each state and community in it. The formation of Council of Ministers helps to give a place to each group and state. This creates a healthy federation by accommodating and incorporating representatives from different groups. In the Presidential system it is not possible, as the formation of the executive becomes prerogative of the President. Further, there is a chance that the President can turn into an authoritarian personality. This is not possible in the parliamentary system. The Prime Minister is one of the Council of Ministers though he is the leader of the House and leader of the nation. He cannot but be a democrat as he listens to various viewpoints not only from the Ministers as his colleagues, but also from the Chief Ministers. Nehru was always in constant communication with the Chief Ministers; sometimes there was opposition from the Chief Ministers to his viewpoint but he listened to them. In the case of Hindu Code Bill he had a strong difference with the President of India, Rajendra Prasad. But he tried to accommodate Prasad's viewpoint in making the Hindu Code Bill, though he characterised the bill as a conservative one. Nehru opposed the intervention by the President, as unconstitutional, on the grounds that in the Indian democracy, the President is a nominal head. As a Prime Minister, he recognised the President's position and wanted the latter to lead as a friend and guide, and not as a master of the team.

Parliamentary democracy depends on the balancing of institutions. Nehru played a decisive role in bringing a balance between the legislature, executive and judiciary. He had a high regard for the legislature. He made it a point to attend every session of the Lok Sabha. He tried to listen to the opposition with a sharp attention. He saw to it that his cabinet colleagues did some homework before attending the session. He, as a team leader, provided leadership to his team for performing better in Parliament. He cooperated with his colleagues and the opposition leaders for showing to the world that India's nascent democracy functions well. The outside intelligentsia, who did study the functioning of Indian Parliament, gave due recognition to Nehru as a Parliamentarian, who got due cooperation from the opposition and his colleagues. There were many stalwarts on the opposition front, leaders like Lohia, Masani and Kripalani. There were political leaders outside the parliamentary system like JP Narain and Vinoba who recognised the leadership qualities of Nehru. Very often these non-parliamentary leaders, branded as the 'saintly politicians' of this country had a bigger influence in politics than the political parties and Nehru was able to get necessary cooperation from these outstanding leaders as well. He directed the administration to provide all cooperation for making the Bhoodan movement a success.

Parliamentary democracy depends on the periodic election for getting a mandate of the people, wherein a political party puts forth an election manifesto and faces the election which is conducted by the neutral authority, the Election Commission. The Congress, under the leadership Nehru, faced the general election to the Lok Sabha and secured the majority in the Lok Sabha and formed the government at the centre. It is interesting to note that the Congress Party under Nehru's leadership faced the general election successfully till he was alive. He placed an Election manifesto in 1946 general election regarding the abolition of the Zamindari System. The general public gave wide support to him, though the election was held before Independence. His leadership was recognised and got legitimacy among the people of India. In the 1952 general election, the manifesto of the Congress carried the question of the implementation of the programmes of the first five year planned document which contained the state's role in both the rural and industrial economy. The public accepted this overwhelmingly. The Congress Party won each election on the basis of its performance, competing with the opposition political parties like the Socialist, Swatantra and Communists, But Nehru had a high regard for these political leaders and parties. He helped some of the leaders to get elected in the by-election to the Lok Sabha and did not field any candidate against the opposition leaders. He was concerned about the quality of the debates in the parliament which was possible only with the presence of the top leaders on the opposition side, Moreover, participation in electoral politics strengthens the parliamentary democracy. Competitive politics is based on the participation of different political parties with a different ideology. Election becomes the festival for the parliamentary democracy. Nehru used to participate in these festivals with all seriousness. Election studies conducted by the independent academia show that the 'Congress had got the electoral support from each section of the society, both in terms of caste and class . Electoral politics help in the mobilisation of various social groups into the system whose demands keep increasing the capacity of the political system.

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## 11.5 NEHRU ON SOCIALISM

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Nehru's interest in socialism can be traced to his Cambridge days when the Fabianism of George Bernard Shaw and the Webbs attracted him. He was, during those days, attending

the lectures of John Maynard Keynes and Bertrand Russell, which influenced his ideas. The fast changing political, social and economic ideas taking place throughout the world sharpened his socialistic influences. India's millions living in poverty made Nehru a socialist, notwithstanding the Marxist ideology of Marx and Lenin which had its profound impact on him. Socialism, with Nehru, was not merely an economic doctrine; 'it is a vital creed', Nehru spoke at the 1936 Congress session, "which I hold with all my head and heart." He was convinced that there was no other way of ending the appalling mass poverty and sufferings in India except through socialism.

Nehru was of the opinion that no ideology other than socialism could fit in the democratic pattern as that of India. He was convinced that no democracy could succeed without imbibing socialist pattern. The essence of socialism, Nehru used to say, lies in "the control by the state of the means of production", and the idea inspiring socialism was the prevention of the exploitation of the poor by the rich. The socialist way, to Nehru, was that of "the ending of poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection." He laughed off Gandhi's claim to being a socialist and rejected the Marxian thesis of the dictatorship of proletariat. Under India's peculiar conditions, Nehru came to advocate the socialistic, if not socialism, pattern of society.

Nehru's concept of socialism was not the abolition of private property, but the replacement of the present profit system by the higher ideal of cooperative service. His socialism was not the state ownership of the means of production, but was their societal and cooperative ownership. Nehru brought socialism close to democracy.

Nehru's socialism has the distinctive characteristic of progressive industrialisation through which alone the Indian economic problems (poverty, backwardness, low rate of production) could be solved and through which alone the modern India could be built. He strongly believed that in industrialisation, "the only solution for this lay in utilising modern science and technology for accelerating the progress of industrialisation on which depended also the prospects of agricultural development". For industrialisation, Nehru ruled out the capitalistic model and pleaded the socialist model by limiting the same to nationalisation of certain key industries and cooperative approach in agriculture while allowing the private sector to participate in industry and agriculture. That was what one may say the essence of socialistic pattern of society ... the model which was made to work through (i) economic planning; (ii) mixed economy, (iii) five years plans. Nehru knew that the socialistic pattern of society was "not socialism in its pure form but this form would," he was convinced, "lead the country in the direction of socialism."

Nehru's concept of socialism had a vision of future India and of modernising India. He wrote: "For we have to build India on a scientific foundation to develop her industries, to change that feudal character of her land system and bring her agriculture in time with modern methods to develop the social services which she lacks so utterly today." If India has to modernise itself, it must, Nehru said, "lessen her religiosity and turn to science. She must get rid of her exclusiveness in thought and social habit which has become like a prison to her, stunting her spirit and preventing growth."

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## 11.6 NEHRU'S INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

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Nehru's significant contribution lies in the evolution and growth of an international outlook. Indeed, he was a great nationalist and as such had a vision of independent India's foreign policy which was in tune with India's national interest. Non-alignment as foreign policy was nationalistic in its objectives. India could not have devoted itself to modernisation, nor would it have successfully protected her frontiers, had it aligned with any one of the two military blocs. Her economy, politics, social existence, internal circumstances would have been at risk if India would have chosen the path of joining any bloc of the post-war (1945) days. So, if Nehru sought to build an independent non-aligned foreign policy for India, it made sense and brought to the fore Nehru as a nationalist.

But Nehru was, despite his being a nationalist, a great internationalist. He was the architect of non-alignment as a movement and as a force on the international forum. At heart, Nehru was internationalist, an advocate for the United Nations, a champion of the world. He had a role for India in the community of nations. India, therefore, Nehru argued, "must be prepared to discard her narrow nationalism in favour of world cooperation and real internationalism." He used to insist that the states should maintain a reasonable balance between nationalism and internationalism. Narrow nationalism, according to him, leads to imperialism which he discarded outrightly, to fascism which he denounced at the first opportunity, to exploitation of one state by another which he thought posed a threat to world peace. He would rather visualise the emergence of a world federation, and a world republic, and not an empire for exploitation. Nehru says: "The world has become internationalised, production is international, markets are international and transport is international. .... No nation is really independent, they are all interdependent."

If romantic loyalties had made Nehru a nationalist, "the rational and pragmatic considerations," Professor Varma says, "for human welfare made him a believer in peaceful coexistence and the ideals of "one world". In an age of nuclear fission, hydrogen fusion and the prospects of neutron bombs and chemical warfares, Nehru could have been an apostle of world peace, a champion of disarmament, and a true believer of the ideals of the United Nations. There is only one alternative to world terrorism, and it is, as Nehru rightly says, world peace.

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## 11.7 SUMMARY

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Nehru's contribution to India's freedom struggle and to the making of modern India can hardly be denied. He was one of the important leaders of the Indian National Congress. Though he was a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and also his successor, he had significant differences with him. Nehru was not a religious man while Gandhi was; he never shared Gandhi's views on spiritualisation of politics; he never subscribed to Gandhi's economic ideas of trusteeship. Nehru was agnostic, and hence, in politics, a secularist. He found in science a solution to all problems. All through his life, Nehru advocated a scientific temper and preached scientific humanism.

Nehru was a political realist and had always a pragmatic approach towards all the problems. In his political ideas, Nehru was a nationalist to the point of internationalism, a firm believer in democracy; had a passion for individual freedom and for equality. He advocated

parliamentary democracy and wanted to build a democratic polity. In his economic ideas, Nehru was a socialist of the Fabian brand. He chose a mid-way between capitalism and Marxism. His outstanding contribution in the international field has been his advocacy of a peaceful and secure world.

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## 11.8 EXERCISES

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1. Explain Nehru's scientific temper and his concept of scientific humanism.
2. Evaluate Nehru's theory of culture.
3. State briefly the main tenets of Nehru's political ideas.
4. State **the** evolution of Nehru's concept of socialism. What are the characteristics of his theory of socialism?
5. Explain briefly Nehru's international outlook.



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# UNIT 12 B.R. AMBEDKAR

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## Structure

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Life Sketch
  - 12.2.1 His Writings
- 12.3 B. R. Ambedkar's Thought and Ideas
  - 12.3.1 Ideological Orientation
  - 12.3.2 Reason and Rights
  - 12.3.3 Religion
  - 12.3.4 Caste
  - 12.3.5 Untouchability
  - 12.3.6 Constitutional Democracy
- 12.4 Social Justice and Supportive Polity
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Exercises

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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Babasaheb Ambedkar is one of the foremost thinkers of modern India. His thought is centrally concerned with issues of freedom, human equality, democracy and socio-political emancipation. He is a unique thinker of the world who himself suffered much humiliation, poverty and social stigma, right from his childhood, yet he rose to great educational and philosophical heights. He was a revolutionary social reformer who demonstrated great faith in democracy and the moral basis of a society. He was one of the principal critics of India's national movement led by M.K.Gandhi. He built civic and political institutions in India and criticised ideologies and institutions that degraded and enslaved people. He undertook several major studies on the economy, social structures and institutions, law and constitutionalism, history and religion with methodological rigour and reflexivity. He was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution and defended its key provisions with scholarly precision and sustained arguments without losing sight of the ideals it upheld while, at the same time; holding firmly to the ground. He embraced Buddhism, recasting it to respond to modern and socially emancipatory urges, with hundreds of thousands of his followers and paved the way for its resurgence in Modern India.

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## 12.2 LIFE SKETCH

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Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956) was born in the untouchable Mahar Caste in Maharashtra on 14 April, 1891. He suffered all kinds of social humiliations in childhood as well as in his

subsequent life on account of the stigma of untouchability. In the class room he was not allowed to sit along with the rest of the students. He had to drink water only in his hand-cup in school, poured by members of the upper castes from above. Learning Sanskrit language was denied to him. In spite of all these hurdles, he successfully completed his graduation from Bombay University and went on to do his Masters and Ph.D. from Columbia University in U.S.A. He was influenced by the liberal and radical thought currents in America and Europe, more particularly with the thought that emerged following the French Revolution. Struggles against racial discrimination in America helped him resolve to fight against caste-based oppression in India. He came to be deeply concerned with untouchability and caste system that prevailed in India. At the same time, he probed the impact that colonialism had on the economy, politics and social life of India.

His M.A. dissertation on *Administration and Finance of the East India Company* and his Ph.D. thesis on *The Evolution of the Provincial Finance in British India* at Columbia University and his D.Sc. dissertation on *The Problem of the Rupee – its Origin and Its Solution* were brilliant contributions to the analysis of colonial economy and politics and to anti-colonial economic thought.

After he completed his Ph.D. at Columbia University, he returned to serve the administration of Baroda Maharaja who had sponsored his education in America. But even after such exceptional qualifications, he had to suffer the pangs of untouchability in Baroda administration. He left his service and was for some time Professor of Political Economy at the Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, Bombay. He made a representation before the Southborough Committee that preceded the Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 and pleaded for separate representation to the depressed classes, as the untouchable and low castes and communities were then known. He started *Mooknayak*, a fortnightly in Marathi in January, 1920 and played a leading role in the first All-India Conference of Depressed Classes held that year, presided over by Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur. He joined the London School of Economics to do his D.Sc. which he completed in 1922 and was invited to the Bar-at-Law from Grey's Inn in the same year. He started his legal practice in Bombay in 1923 and played an active role in the political mobilisation and organisation of the untouchables. He formed the *Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha* (Depressed Classes Welfare Association) in 1924. In 1927, he was nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council. He led the famous Satyagraha at Chowdar Tank in Maliad demanding rights for untouchables from common water tank, from which they were hitherto barred, eventually leading to the burning of the *Manusmṛiti*. He started the fortnightly journal *Bahishkrit Bharat* in Marathi and formed two organisations, *Samaj Samata Sangh* and *Samata Sainik Dal* in 1927 to reinforce the demand for equality of the depressed classes. In 1928, the Depressed Classes Education Society, Bombay was founded. The fortnightly journal *Samata* too was brought out in the same year. During these years, Dr. Ambedkar remained active as the professor of law. In 1928, he made his deputation before the Simon Commission, enquiring into the issue of constitutional reforms in India. He led the Satyagraha at Kalram temple, Nasik demanding temple entry to untouchables in 1930. He presided over the First All India Depressed Classes Congress, held in Nagpur in 1930.

Dr. Ambedkar's emphasis on self-help and the task of emancipation of untouchables as primarily resting on themselves, his vision of Modern India and his ideas on rights, democracy and representation increasingly put him against the Indian National Congress and M.K.

Gandhi, its undisputed leader. This opposition was poignantly visible at the Round Table Conference in 1931 where Dr Ambedkar demanded separate electorate for the depressed classes, which, M.K.Gandhi, as the sole representative of the Congress vehemently opposed. M.K. Gandhi went on a fast unto death against the communal award of 1932 that granted separate electorate to the untouchables. Dr.Ambedkar negotiated on behalf of the Depressed classes and signed the Poona Pact, agreeing for the joint electorate with reservation for depressed classes, that led to the withdrawal of the fast by M.K.Gandhi.

In 1936, Dr Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party which contested 17 seats in the elections of 1937 in the Bombay Province and won 15 of them. The World War II and the demand of the Muslim League for Pakistan introduced new and complex issues in the national movement. Dr Ambedkar established a different party, the Scheduled caste federation in 1942 and was appointed as a member of the Viceroy's Council in the same year for a period of five years.

Ambedkar was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal and in the Assembly, made a plea for a united India with the Congress and the Muslim League working together. He was appointed as the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution and became the law minister in the Nehru Cabinet in August 1947. In both these capacities he conceptualised, formulated and defended a free and egalitarian framework for public life in India with extensive safeguards for the disadvantaged and autonomy for religious minorities and linguistic and cultural groups in India.

Ambedkar resigned from the Nehru Cabinet in 1951 and strove to work out an alternative to the lack of social and economic democracy in India and the inability of the Constitutional democracy to effectively function in its absence. Such a search eventually led him to conversion to Buddhism and the proposal for the establishment of the Republican Party of India. He died on 6 December, 1956 mourned by millions. He left behind a complex body of thought scattered across a large number of writings and speeches, an eventful public life spanning across civic and political life and a radical agenda for economic, social and cultural reconstruction.

### 12.2.1 His Writings

Dr. Ambedkar wrote several books. Unlike his contemporaries, he had done a lot of original research on his texts. Apart from writing the Indian Constitution as the Chairman of its Drafting Committee and defending it in the marathon debates of the Constituent Assembly, he wrote several books that reflect systematic thinking. Apart from his doctoral dissertations on *The Problem of the Rupee* (1923) and *The Evolution of Provincial Finance in British India*(1925) he wrote *Annihilation of Caste*(1936), *Thoughts on Pakistan* (1940), *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables*(1945), *Who were the Sudras?* (1946), *The Untouchables: who were They.and Why they became Untouchables?* (1948) , *States and Minorities* (1947), *Thoughts on linguistic States* (1955) and his magnum opus *The Buddha and his Dhamma* (1957) are the most important. Apart from them he wrote numerous articles, submitted learned memoranda, delivered lectures and commented on the issues in the journals he published.

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## 12.9 B. R. AMBEDKAR'S THOUGHT AND IDEAS

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Dr. Ambedkar's thought has many dimensions. There were very few issues that he left untouched. He formulated his opinion on many crucial questions that India was confronting during his times. His versatility is reflected in his social and political thought, economic ideas, law and constitutionalism.

### 12.3.1 Ideological Orientation

Dr Ambedkar described himself as a 'progressive radical' and occasionally as a 'progressive conservative' depending upon the context of demarcation from liberals, Marxists and others as the case might be. He was an ardent votary of freedom. He saw it as a positive power and capacity, enabling people to make their choices without being restrained by economic processes and exploitation, social institutions and religious orthodoxies and fears and prejudices. He thought that liberalism upheld a narrow conception of freedom which tolerated huge accumulation of resources in a few hands and the deprivation and exploitation that it bred. He thought that liberalism is insensitive about social and political institutions which, while upholding formal equality, permitted massive inequalities in the economic, social and cultural arenas. He argued that liberal systems conceal deep inequalities of minorities such as the conditions of the Blacks in U.S.A. and Jews in Europe. He further argued that liberalism was often drawn to justify colonial exploitation and the extensive injustices it sustained. Liberal stress on the individual ignored community bonds and the necessity of the latter to sustain a reflective and creative self. Further liberalism ignored the repression and the alienation of the self that exploitative and dominant structures bred. He found that liberalism has an inadequate understanding of state and the measures that state has to necessarily adopt to promote and foster good life. He felt that the principle of equality before law is truly a great advance as compared to the inegalitarian orders that it attempted to supplant but it is not adequate. He advanced stronger notions such as equality of consideration, equality of respect and equality of dignity. He was sensitive to the notion of respect and the notion of community was central in his consideration.

Ambedkar identified certain crucial areas on which he was in tune with Marxism. He argued that the task of philosophy is to transform the world, as Marx suggested in his theses on Feuerbach, and he saw the central message of the Buddha as demanding the same. There is conflict between classes and class-struggle is writ large in social relations. He argued that a good society demands extensive public ownership of the means of production and equal opportunity to everyone to develop his or her self to the fullest extent. He, however, rejected the inevitability of socialism without the intervention of human agency concretely working towards it; the economic interpretation of history which does not acknowledge the crucial role that political and ideological institutions play and the conception of the withering away of the state. He decried the strategy of violence as a means to seize power and called for resolute mass action to bring about a good society. He underscored the transformative effect of struggles in transforming those launching the struggles and the social relations against which they are launched. He further argued that a desirable political order can be created only by acknowledging a moral domain which he saw eminently expressed in the Buddha's teachings.

He was very critical of the Brahmanical ideology which, he felt, has been the dominant ideological expression in India. He argued that it reconstituted itself with all its vehemence by defeating the revolution set in motion by the Buddha. It subscribed to the principle of graded inequality in organising social institutions and relations; defended the principle of birth over the principle of worth; undermined reason and upheld rituals and priest-craft. It reduced the shudra and the untouchable to perpetual drudgery and ignominy. It defended inequality and unequal distribution of resource<sup>3</sup> and positions and sanctified such measures by appeal to doctrines such as *karma-siddhanta*. It upheld the principle of the superiority of mental labour over manual labour. It had little sympathy towards the degraded and the marginalised. It left millions of people in their degraded condition, away from civilisation, and defended their abominable conditions. It had little place for freedom and for re-evaluation of choices, It parcellised society into umpteen closed groups making them unable to close ranks, foster a spirit of community and strive towards shared endeavours. It took away from associated life its joys and sorrows, emasculated struggles and strivings and deplored sensuousness and festivity. He constructed Brahmanism as totally lacking in any moral values and considerations based on such values.

Ambedkar was a bitter critic of Gandhi and Gandhism. He attacked Gandhi's approach to the abolition of untouchability, an approach that denied its sanction in the shastras and which called upon caste Hindus to voluntarily renounce it and make reparations for the same. Ambedkar felt that rights and humanity cannot be left to the mercy and prejudices of people who have developed a vested interest in undermining them. He did not demarcate the caste system and varna system, as Gandhi did, but saw both of them as upholding the same principle of graded inequality. Even if untouchability is abolished through the Gandhian appeal to conscience, which Ambedkar did not think possible, untouchables will continue to occupy the lowest rung of society as a layer of the shudras. He saw Gandhi not merely caving in to Hindu orthodoxy but reformulating such orthodoxy afresh, Gandhi was dispensing moral platitudes to untouchables and trying to buy them with kindness while letting others to promote their interests, without hindrance. He rejected the appellation 'Harijan' that Gandhi had bestowed on untouchables and poured scorn on it.

Ambedkar rejected many central notions as propounded by Gandhi such as Swaraj, non-violence, decentralisation, Khadi, trusteeship and vegetarianism. He subscribed to a modern polity with modern economy. This-worldly concerns were central to his agenda rather than other-worldly search. He felt that an uncritical approach to Panchayat Raj will reinforce the dominant classes in the countryside handing over additional resources and legitimacy to them to exploit the social classes and groups below them.

### 12.3.2 Reason and Rights

Ambedkar saw the modern era as heralding a triumph of human reason from myths, customs and religious superstitions. The world and man, he argued, can be explained by human reason and endeavour. The supernatural powers need not be invoked for the purpose. In fact the supernatural powers themselves reflect weak human capacities and an underdeveloped state of human development: He therefore saw the expression of human reason manifest in science and modern technology positively. If there are problems with regard to them then the same reason is capable of offering the necessary correctives. Further, he saw knowledge as eminently practical rather than speculative and esoteric. He felt that speculative knowledge

divorced from active engagement with practice leads to priest-craft and speculation.

Ambedkar's attitude to religion remained ambivalent. While he did not subscribe to a belief in a personal God or revelation, he felt that religion, as morality, provides an enduring foundation to societies and enables collective pursuit of good life. Such a religion elevates motives, upholds altruism and concern for others, binding people in solidarity and concern. It cares and supports and strives against exploitation, injustice and wrong-doing.

He argued that freedom, equality and fraternity are essential conditions for good life and a regime of discrete rights need to be constructed on them as the foundation. He understood rights not merely within the narrow confines of liberal individualism but as individual and group-rights. He defended both types of rights in the Constituent Assembly debates. Further, he argued for both civil and political rights and social and economic rights. He did not see them in opposition but as reinforcing one another. If there is a conflict between them, they have to be negotiated through civic and political forums. He also subscribed to the rights of minorities and cultural groups to maintain their distinctive beliefs and identities while at the same time affording them proper conditions to take their rightful place in public affairs. He defended preferential treatment accorded to disadvantaged communities not only for reasons of equality but also on grounds of egalitarian social structures, and for the pursuit of a sane and good society.

### 12.3.3 Religion

Ambedkar dwelt extensively on major religions of the world, particularly Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. He wrote a great deal on Hinduism and Buddhism. The mainstream trajectory of religious evolution that he traced in early India was the Vedic society getting degenerated into Aryan society; the rise of Buddhism and the social and moral transformation that it brought about and the counterrevolution marked in the development of a specific ideological and political expression which he termed Brahmanism.

He found that the Hindu scriptures do not lend themselves to a unified and coherent understanding. They reflect strong cleavages within and across sects and tendencies. There are cleavages within the Vedic literature; the Upanishadic thought, often, cannot be reconciled with the Vedic thought; the Smriti literature is, quite often, in contention with the Sruti literature; gods come to be pitted against one another and Tantra is in contention with the smriti literature. The avatars of Hinduism, such as Rama and Krishna, cannot be held up for adulation as exemplaries. He saw the Bhagavadgita as primarily putting forward a set of arguments to save Brahmanism in the wake of the rise of Buddhism and the inability of the former to defend itself by appeals to rituals and religious practices.

Ambedkar developed a new interpretation of Buddhism and saw it as socially engaged. It privileged the poor and the exploited and was concerned with the sufferings and joys of this world. It does not subscribe to the existence of God or the eternity of soul. It upholds reason, affirms the existence of this world, subscribes to a moral order and is in tune with science. He saw the great values of freedom, equality and community as central to the teachings of the Buddha.

Ambedkar had both theological and sociological criticism against Christianity and Islam. Both

of them subscribe to a transcendental domain which, apart from its affront to human reason, beget authoritative and paternalistic tendencies. In a sense they dwarf human reason, freedom of enquiry and equality of persons. Their pronouncements cannot be reconciled with scientific reason. Christian belief that Jesus is the son of God militates against reason. Both these religions, he felt, accommodated themselves to graded inequality and ranking to different degrees. Their precepts have often led their adherents to resort to force and violence. He saw the Buddha standing tall against the protagonists of both these religions.

#### 12.3.4 Caste

Ambedkar's understanding of caste and caste system underwent certain significant changes overtime. Initially he identified the characteristics of caste as endogamy superimposed on exogamy in a shared cultural milieu. He felt that evils such as sati, child-marriage and prohibition of widow-remarriage were its inevitable outcomes. Once a caste closed its boundaries, other castes too followed suit. The Brahmins closing themselves socially first gave rise to castes. Ambedkar continued to emphasise the endogamous characteristic of caste but roped in other features such as division of labour, absence of inter-dining and the principle of birth which he had initially considered as integral to endogamy. He also found that caste name is important for the continued reproduction of caste. He argued that castes as discrete entities have to be distinguished from caste system based on the principle of graded inequality. At the pinnacle of this system are the Brahmins. We argued that ranking on the basis of graded inequality safeguards the stability of the system and ensures its continued reproduction which simple inequality would not have permitted. The dissenting members are accommodated as another grade in the hierarchy of deference and contempt that deeply mark the caste system. Ambedkar thought that caste is an essential feature of Hinduism. A few reformers may have denounced it but for the vast majority of Hindus breaking the codes of caste is a clear violation of deeply held beliefs. The principles governing varna system and caste system are one and the same. Both of them uphold graded inequality and subscribe to the doctrine of birth rather than worth.

Ambedkar argued for the annihilation of caste without which wielding community bonds, and upholding freedom and equality becomes well-nigh impossible. He suggested inter-caste marriages and inter-caste dining for the purpose although the latter, he considered, is too feeble an exercise to constitute enduring bonds. He further argued that shastras which defend 'varnasl-ratndharma' have to be abandoned as they justify and legitimise graded organisation of society. He also felt that priesthood in Hinduism should be open to all the co-religionists on the basis of certified competence rather than on birth. At the same time he thought this project is well nigh impossible to be carried out because what is to be renounced is believed to be religiously ordained.

#### 12.3.5 Untouchability

Ambedkar distinguished the institution of untouchability from that of caste although the former too is stamped by the same principle of graded inequality as the latter. Untouchability is not merely an extreme form of caste degradation but a qualitatively different one as the system kept the untouchable outside the fold and made any social interaction with him polluting and deplorable. He argued that in spite of differences and cleavages all untouchables share common disadvantages and meted out the same treatment by caste Hindus: they are

condemned to ghettos on the outskirts of the village, are universally despised and kept away from human association.

He did not subscribe to the position that untouchability has its basis in race. He saw it as a social institution defended by the ideology of Brahmanism. While he did not extensively probe the reasons for the origin of untouchability in one instance, he proposed a very imaginative thesis that untouchables were broken men living on the outskirts of village communities who, due to their refusal to give up Buddhism and beef-eating, came to be condemned as untouchables.

Given the deep-seated beliefs and practices of untouchability prevailing in India, Ambedkar thought that no easy solution can be found for the malaise. Removal of untouchability required the transformation of the entire society wherein respect and rights towards the other person becomes a way of life rather than a mere constitutional mechanism. Given the entrenched interests and prejudices revolving around the institution of untouchability, it was something too much to expect from entrenched groups. Therefore he felt that the primary burden of emancipating themselves fell on the untouchables themselves. Such self-help required not only struggles but also education and organisation. Further a constitutional democracy with preferences at various levels can help enormously in such an endeavour.

### **12.3.6 Constitutional Democracy**

The major area of Ambedkar's work was on constitutional democracy. He was adept in different constitutions of the world particularly those that provided an expansive notion of democracy. Rule of law as a bond uniting people and according equal participation of people in collective affairs was quite central to his imagination. He was deeply sensitive to the interface between law on one hand and customs and popular beliefs on the other. He however felt that customs may defend parochial interests and popular beliefs might be deeply caught in prejudices and may not uphold fairness. They may not be in tune with the demands of time, morality and reason. But if law upholds freedom and democracy then it could be placed at the service of common good. Given the long-drawn prejudices and denial of justice in public culture he thought that the role of the state based on law and democratic mandate is crucial. He envisaged a democracy informed by law and a law characterised by sensitivity to democracy. Law upheld reason and morality but without the authoritative injunctions of law, the former had no teeth.

Such a stress on democracy and law made Ambedkar to strongly stress the autonomy of the state. State needs to transcend the parochial interests galore in society which often tend to reduce the state as an instrument of their purpose. He argued that ascriptive majorities which are permanent, and not amenable for political dissolution and reconstitution, too can be considered as parochial interests. They can undermine rights but at the same time pretend that they are upholding constitutional democracy.

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## **12.4 SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SUPPORTIVE POLITY**

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Ambedkar was the first major theoretician in India who argued that consideration for the disadvantaged should be the constitutive basis of a state if the state is committed to the



upholding of rights. He developed a complex set of criteria to determine disadvantage. Untouchability was only one of the great social disadvantages, although it was one of the most degrading and despicable one. He concentrated on socially engendered disadvantages not because he was unaware of natural and hereditary disadvantages but he felt that most disadvantages are upheld by dominant social relations which attempt to convert them as natural disadvantages foreclosing attention to them and absolving larger society from any responsibility towards them. He left behind a system of safeguards for the disadvantaged in general and the untouchables in particular. He thought that a set of positive measures are a better guarantee than merely the moral conscience of society although the latter is a prerequisite to sustain such measures in the longer run.

With regard to a scheme of safeguards he advanced three types of measures although all these three types of measures were not seen by him as appropriate to all the disadvantaged groups and equally so. Their appropriateness is something to be worked out in response to the concrete conditions of the concerned group. He demanded an autonomous political representation to the disadvantaged groups not merely to ensure their political presence but to ensure that the concerned groups undertake their pursuits of development, preservation or reproduction, as the case may be, by themselves. He envisaged definitive constitutional measures for the purpose rather than merely rely on public conscience. He argued that such representation will enable these groups to take into account the larger and the common issues into account and pitch their specific demands accordingly. He sought reservation for the disadvantaged groups in public employment to the extent they fulfill the requirement for such employment. He felt that they would be inevitably marginalised if such support was not legally extended to them. He sought extensive supportive policy measures towards these groups so as to extend to them the benefits of various developmental and welfare measures that a state undertakes.

Ambedkar saw preferential measures as resting on an inclusive conception of rights rather than merely the goodwill or benevolence of the majority. In fact goodwill itself needs to be cultivated with an awareness of such rights. In the absence of such cultivation, goodwill and benevolence often collapse into narrow pursuit of interests masquerading themselves in the language of altruism.

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## 12.5 SUMMARY

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Ambedkar has often been portrayed as a leader who upheld the partisan cause of the untouchables. He was of course partisan and he upheld the cause of the untouchables as the most disadvantaged and reviled segment of the Indian society. But such partisanship and advocacy were grounded on a body of thought and ideas built on defensible arguments which he very ably and effectively deployed. He critically engaged with the ideas and ideologies in place in the world of his times and attempted to devise his own valuations and judgements on them. He did not cave in to their popularity and preeminence. He had a place for religion in the private domain as well as in the moral life of societies but such a place was grounded in good reason. An inclusive conception of rights and an assertion of this world was central to his understanding of public life. He was an ardent votary of democracy. But democracy cannot be confined to a mode of rule but needs to become a way of life. He was a trenchant critic of the caste system and untouchability and strove hard to put an end to them. He saw

divorced from active engagement with practice leads to priest-craft and speculation.

Ambedkar's attitude to religion remained ambivalent. While he did not subscribe to a belief in a personal God or revelation, he felt that religion, as morality, provides an enduring foundation to societies and enables collective pursuit of good life. Such a religion elevates motives, upholds altruism and concern for others, binding people in solidarity and concern. It cares and supports and strives against exploitation, injustice and wrong-doing.

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social justice as an essential attribute of a good polity and suggested concrete measures for the same. His ideas mark him as different from his contemporary thinkers and today we regard him, and he is much relevant to us, for being so much different from others.

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## 12.6 EXERCISES

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1. Comment on Ambedkar's critique of liberalism.
2. What were Ambedkar's significant differences with Marx?
3. Highlight the characteristics of Brahmanism as an ideology.
4. Identify four issues of conflict between Gandhi and Ambedkar.
5. Discuss the significance of reason in Ambedkar's thought.
6. Highlight the conception of rights in Ambedkar's thought.
7. Review Ambedkar's understanding of Hinduism.
8. Why does Ambedkar regard Buddhism as appropriate to the modern world?
9. What do you think of Ambedkar's critique of Christianity and Islam?
10. Highlight the characteristic features of untouchability, according to Ambedkar.
11. Why does Ambedkar think that struggle against untouchability has to be launched on several fronts?
12. Highlight the reasons for Ambedkar's defence of constitutional Democracy.
13. Why does Ambedkar think that ascriptive majorities may spell doom to constitutional democracy?
14. Adduce Ambedkar's arguments for extending preferential treatment to the disadvantaged.
15. Outline the scheme of preferential treatment suggested by Ambedkar. From your reading and experience evaluate any one of these preferential schemes.
16. Why does Ambedkar think that caste system is impermeable to demands of Equality?
17. "Hinduism and caste system are inseparable". Do you agree?

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## UNIT 13 RABINDRANATH TAGORE

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### Structure

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Theory of Freedom and Self-Realisation
- 13.3 Emphasis on Human Reason
- 13.4 Critique of Nationalism
- 13.5 Differences with Gandhi
- 13.6 Analysis of Bolshevism
- 13.7 Summary
- 13.8 Exercises

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was an outstanding literary figure of India who exerted considerable influence on human thinking in the contemporary world. This influence extended to the political arena as well by his lucid elucidation of important concepts like nationalism, freedom, human rationality and his many differences with Mahatma Gandhi's (1869-1948) philosophy and strategies.

While Gandhi was a political and social activist and Tagore was a poet, there was remarkable consistency in the enunciation of their major political themes, which they developed and refined reflecting on major events of their time. Furthermore, in Tagore there was a quest of a poet for human perfection and completeness and not merely a pragmatic analysis of a particular problem or a situation. His expression was an eloquent appeal of his faith in the human spirit and the optimism by which the entire humankind could think of realising freedom, breaking all artificial barriers, which had been built over the years. These barriers built on prejudices and hatred were the stumbling blocs in the way of achieving the ultimate aim of a beautiful and harmonious world for all paving the way for human perfection with flowering of human creativity and with triumph of human dignity. The modern Indian political tradition of assimilating the Western ideas with the Eastern ones, which began with Rammohan Roy, reached its culmination in Tagore.

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### 13.2 THEORY OF FREEDOM AND SELF-REALISATION

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A specific Indian idea of freedom that started to evolve with Rammohan, was articulated subsequently by Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), Gandhi and Tagore. Rammohan wanted to synthesise Indian and Western ideas with an unflinching commitment to his own tradition. Vivekananda like Rammohan was rooted in the Indian tradition. Aurobindo, Gandhi and Tagore reiterated his emphasis on harmony without losing sight of one's identity and culture.

For Tagore, freedom was not merely political emancipation but the mingling of the individual

with the universe depicted in his song- my freedom *is in this air, in the sky and in this light of universe*. The goal of freedom lay in making one perfect. He significantly remarked that many nations and people were powerful but not free because realisation of freedom was something very different from merely using coercive power. It was the condition and attitude of life in which one might wish to develop his best. The human being as a part of this great universe could enjoy real freedom only when he could harmonise his relations with the world. It is a bond of unity where power leads to disunity.

Tagore's notion of freedom was influenced by Expressionism (1910-24) and political theorists of the early Twentieth century like Ernest Barker, Mary Follet and Harold Laski who vigorously pleaded for a plural society as a basic precondition for the successful functioning of democracy. He shared with Eliot the idea of the modern society as mechanical and hollow thwarting the creative human spirit and energies. He desired a freedom that would enable a human being to realise his ideas and aspirations as it found expression in different types of creative art with the help of reason and scientific outlook and by allowing the potentialities of industrialisation towards human liberation.

Tagore guided by the *Upanishadic* doctrine of *Satyam, Sivam and Advaitam* (truth, of goodness and unity) was utterly dissatisfied with the philosophy of glorification and expansionism pursued by powerful nations for that thwarted human creativity. This was evident in his two symbolic works *Raktakorabi* and *Muktadhara*. However, like Russell, he continued to retain his faith in the human being as evident from his *Russian Chithi* and *Africa* with its clear preference for socialism, democracy, freedom and social justice that transcended national boundaries and races.

For Tagore, freedom of the individual was the basis or the growth of human civilisation and progress. It was the inner urge of a person to be in harmony with the great universe. Freedom was everything creative and spontaneous in human mind and spirit. It was the capacity to create a better order. Tagore was against unquestioned conformity which he described as "the state of slavery which is thus brought on is the worst form of cancer to which humanity is subject". As a believer in individual action he rejected the claim of finality of any action and insisted that there were many paths to individual salvation and moral progress. He conceived of history as the gradual unfolding and realisation of absolute truth and through it the individual revelation and fulfilment and in the end the emergence of the truly free and content human being. He remarked to Einstein that his religion was the religion of man. His was quest for the eternal and it is due to such generous and humane ideas that civilisation assumes meaning.

Tagore, like the early Indian liberals considered the real problem of India as social and not political. A narrow vision of political liberty would grossly be inadequate in establishing a good society for that would deny individual's moral and spiritual freedom. He castigated even the free independent countries being a reflection of this narrow view. Mere political freedom could not make one free, as cleavages and weaknesses of society would pose a danger to politics. Without creating confidence in the average person, he would always feel inferior and "the tyranny of injustice" would perpetuate. It was in this emphasis of comprehending the essential basis of realising freedom by broadening the base through inculcating a sense of identity and pride in every single individual in the world that Tagore's conception departed from other popular political theories of freedom which focuses more on the abstract individual.

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### 13.3 EMPHASIS ON HUMAN REASON

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In *Sabhyatar Sankat* or *Crisis in Civilisation* (1941) he mentioned his admiration of the humanistic tradition of English literature, which formed the basis of his faith in modern civilisation. He admitted that India's link with the outside world was established with the arrival of the British and cited Burke, Macaulay, Shakespeare and Byron as those who inspired and generated a confidence in the triumph of the human being. Indians aspired for independence but believed in English generosity and the British character, which reflected their philosophy of universal fellowship. Like other contemporary Indian thinkers, Tagore also believed that India benefitted from her contact with the West in general and Britain in particular. He considered the British victory over India as the victory of modernity. The right to freedom in a modern world is a basic human right.

Tagore not only mentioned how as a young person he was immensely influenced by John Bright but also the pain he felt at the denial to Indians the industrial power that made Great Britain a world power. He also pointed out to the lack of modernity and absence of scientific temper in India, a void filled by coming into contact with the West thereby making the nineteenth century an age of co-operation with Europe. However Europe in the twentieth century failed by its own criterion for it was unable to transmit its basic civilisation traits to others. In this context he provided an interesting contrast between the nature and purpose of the British rule with that of the Soviet rule, the two powers that administered a number of divergent races. Britain by its rule had made the subject races docile whereas the Soviets were trying to make them strong. India experienced the strength of the West but not its liberating power. The British official policy was in sharp contrast to outstanding individuals like C.F. Andrews that Britain produced, which was an unparalleled feat, and one that reinforced his faith in humanity and in the ultimate triumph of human reason and freedom (Tagore 1961: 414).

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### 13.4 CRITIQUE OF NATIONALISM

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Tagore's perception of the dual role, one positive, "the spirit of the West" and the other negative, "the nation of the West" was the starting point of his analysis of nationalism as it developed in the West (Tagore, 1976: 11). He paid glowing tributes to the achievements of the West in the field of literature and art which he described as "titanic in its uniting power...sweeping the height and the depth of the universe" and also mentioned the presence of outstanding individuals fighting for the cause of humanity. However, behind this beneficence also lay the malefic aspect, "using all her power of greatness for ends, which are against the infinite and eternal in Man" (Tagore *ibid*: 39-40). He attributed this contradiction to the malady of the nation-state. The nation, which represented the organised self-interest of a whole people, was also the "least human and least spiritual" and the biggest evil in the contemporary world. It built a "civilisation of power" (Tagore *ibid*: 8) which made it exclusive, vain and proud. One form of its manifestation was the colonisation of people and subjecting them to exploitation and suffering. In this context Tagore cited the example of Japan-which had secured the benefits of Western civilisation to the maximum possible extent without getting dominated by the West. He considered the nation to be nothing else than an "organisation of politics and commerce" (Tagore *ibid*: 7). Its emphasis on success made it a machine that stifled harmony in social life and eclipsing the end of good life, namely the individual, He

mentioned the anarchists who opposed any form of imposition of power over the individual. He rejected the philosophy of a balance of terror on the premise that man's world was a moral one. He denounced communal sectarianism and nationalism and criticised abstract cosmopolitanism. Berlin (1977: 65) wrote:

“Tagore stood fast on the narrow causeway, and did not betray his vision of the difficult truth. We condemned romantic overattachment to the past, what he called the tying of India to the past "like a sacrificial goat tethered to a post", and he accused men who displayed it – they seemed to him reactionary- of not knowing what true political freedom was, pointing out that it is from English thinkers and English books that the very notion of political liberty was derived. But against cosmopolitanism he maintained that the English stood on their own feet, and so must Indians. In 1917 he once more denounced the danger of "leaving everything to the unalterable will of the Master," be he brahmin or Englishman”.

Tagore saw very clearly two clear-cut alternatives to the present scenario: one to continue to fight amongst one another and second, to locate the "true basis of reconciliation and mutual help" (Tagore *ibid*: 60). This strong denunciation of nationalism was surely hastened by the First World War. In *what is a Nation?* (1901), he analysed Renan's (1823-1892) views and categorically declared imperialism as the logical culmination of a nation and that race, language, commercial interests, religious unity and geographical location did not constitute the human essence. In the early years of the twentieth century he noted the dangers of narrow religious beliefs and aggressive nationalism at the expense of liberalism and offered universalism as an effective substitute, reflected in many of his later writings including the *Gitanjali*.

Tagore wrote of the European dominance of Asia and Africa while dissecting the causes of the First World War. The root cause of the War was the German scramble for colonies and division of the world into the ruler and the ruled. He aptly remarked that when such philosophy was propounded outside Europe, the Europeans did not understand its bitterness but when they were at the receiving end they felt the pinch. Germany's action at that time was not a unique one but a part of the history of European civilisation. He also prophesied correctly that the First World War would not be the last one and that another war was inevitable.

The immediate reception of Tagore's criticisms of nationalism was a mixed one. The American Press was hostile. *The Detroit Journal* warned the people against "such sickly saccharine mental poison with which Tagore would corrupt the minds of the youth of our great United States" (cited in Kripalani 1961: 139). Within India some of his contemporaries took exception to his remarks. For instance, some members of the *Ghadar* Party mistook his criticisms "as betrayal of Indian nationalist aspirations" (cited in Kripalani *ibid*: 139). They thought that Tagore, who was knighted by the British a year ago, was a British agent and was sent to the United States to discredit India. In Japan, initially he received great ovation as poet-seer from the land of the Buddha. But when in his lectures he warned them against imitating the lust for power of the Western civilisation as well as its worship of the nation state he was virulently criticised. When he cautioned Japan to follow only the humane values of the West his popularity declined (cited in Kripalani *ibid*: 139). However, a small number of Japanese intelligentsia became aware of the significance of Tagore's plank. After the war, it came to be known that typed copies of Tagore's *Nationalism* were distributed amongst soldiers on the Western front. There were speculations that this was the work of the European pacifists.



A British soldier Max Plomann admitted after the war that he left the army forever in 1917 after reading Tagore's work. Rolland in a letter dated August 26<sup>th</sup> 1919 expressed views similar to that of Tagore's.

Tagore characterised the modern age as European because of Europe's leadership in innovation, science and technology and emphasis on reason. But he was equally conscious of its weaknesses namely arrogance of power, exploitative and dominating nature and desire for supremacy. Though the time and context of Tagore formulations has drastically changed, his concerns, namely non-acceptance of Euro-centrism and its inability to transmit basic traits of a universal civilisation remain valid even today.

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## 13.5 DIFFERENCES WITH GANDHI

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The essence of Gandhi's entire political philosophy is in the *Hind Swaraj* (1908) and Tagore's in *Swadeshi Samaj* (1904). Both of them had a great deal of respect and reverence for one another, though this mutual respect did not prohibit them from expressing basic disagreements about their respective perceptions of contemporary reality and the desired nature of the movements in the given Indian situation. A major controversy erupted between them following Gandhi's return to India from South Africa and his meteoric rise in Indian politics culminating in the non co-operation movement and Tagore's articulation of a philosophy of universalism and his criticism of the cult of nationalism during the First World War.

Tagore regarded India's basic problem to be social and not political, though like Gandhi, he was conscious of the acute differences and conflicts in the Indian society. As such society and not politics was his primary area of focus. He could perceive that the triumph of science had united the whole country into one, which made possible for seeking a unity that was not political. This perception led him to conclude that India could offer a solution in this regard for she "never had a real sense of nationalism" (Tagore *ibid*: 64). Regarding the nationalist upsurge he was convinced that it would popularise the struggle for independence but would be unproductive in the overall context of its own development for the quest of freedom would imperil its realisation.

Tagore developed this argument after a careful scrutiny of the Gandhian leadership and strategy. He derived the basic framework of this evaluation from his earlier experiences during the days of agitation against Bengal partition of 1905. In that movement, initially Tagore took an active part popularising *Raksha Bandhan* and nationalistic songs. It was immediately during the period after the publication of *Swadeshi Samaj* that he passionately pleaded for the revitalisation of the decaying villages and creation of new awareness amongst the ordinary people. Though initially he was in the forefront of the movement, he became disillusioned since he could very clearly see that there was no concern about the need for mass awareness and that the city-based middle class were keen on protecting its own selfish interests. After withdrawing from the movement he made serious attempts to rebuild the village life within the Zamindari system, the then prevailing system. This background is important for comprehending his basic disagreements with Gandhi.

Tagore's first written evidence about Gandhi's preferences and policies were in a letter written on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1919 from *Shantiniketan* advising Gandhi to be cautious about the programme of non co-operation for in no way did it represent India's moral superiority. He

took note of the important changes that came with the rise of Gandhi in Indian politics. He thought very highly of Gandhi's leadership and could also see that the proposed non-cooperation movement would engulf the whole country and would be much bigger than the anti-partition movement of Bengal. He could also grasp the important difference between the present phase and the earlier ones. Earlier the political leaders did not look beyond the English educated people, whereas in contrast, Gandhi emerged as the spokesperson of millions of poor illiterate Indians. He spoke their language and wore their dress. Though his precepts were practical and not bookish they lacked logic and scientific reasoning. They did not contain a philosophy for awakening the nation. Instead of following the path of truth Gandhi attempted a shortcut by taking the easy path.

Subsequently he was perturbed by the fact that everyone talked in the same voice and made the same gestures and characterised this development as symbolising the worst manifestations of nationalism for it indicated a slavish mentality and had nothing to do with the alien rule. What he resented most was the fact that the Gandhian directives, which included manual spinning of yarn and burning of foreign cloth, were medieval in nature. None of these stipulations were dissected critically and were accepted as dogmas. The Gandhian directives were followed mechanically and not rationally. Moreover the emphasis on simplicity would retard economic advancement for the narrow form of *swadeshi* would only result in restrictive provincial attitude, isolationism and provoke unnecessary hostility in the rest of the world. Gandhi's plans would lead to India's isolation preventing western knowledge and advancements from reaching India.

Disagreeing with Gandhi, Tagore pointed out that it was not possible to estimate the exact magnitude of idle time among the middle class and that peasants who constituted eighty-percent of the Indian population without a meaningful occupation for six months in a year. He wondered whether it was desirable to popularise the use of the spinning wheel. Instead he preferred constructive programmes like co-operative agriculture for that would eliminate the malaise of small unproductive holdings and fight poverty. He felt that popularising a scientific concept like co-operative agriculture would be more important than any political action. He thought it was wrong of Gandhi to instruct Indian women to stop reading English and also opposed Gandhi's call for boycott of government schools. Though critical of the existing system he felt that in the absence of a better alternative it would only result in perpetuating ignorance, superstitions and backwardness. In 1928 Tagore criticised Gandhi's defence of *varnashrama* by arguing that the system was inefficient as the occupation follows birth and not individual capacity. Hereditary occupation was mechanical, repetitive, obstructed innovation and retarded human freedom. He lamented that a true *kshatriya* was conspicuous by its absence in India. Similarly he dismissed Gandhi's blame on untouchability as the cause of the Bihar earthquake on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1934, as unscientific, unreasonable and that it failed to explain the fact as to why the poor and the lower castes suffered more than the privileged and upper castes. On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1939 in a letter to the Congress he warned against the worship of power within the Congress when some of Gandhi's followers compared Gandhi to Mussolini and Hitler thus insulting Gandhi before the entire world. As a desired alternative, Tagore pleaded for "universal humanity and gave a call for recognising the vast dimensions of India in its world context" because "henceforth any nation which seeks isolation for itself must come into conflict with the time-spirit and find no peace. From now onwards the thinking of every nation will have to be international. It is the striving of the new age to develop in the mind this faculty of universality" (cited in Dalton 1982: 202).

In response to these charges Gandhi replied that "Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian". He defended the use of the spinning wheel for that was the only way to 'realise the essential and living one-ness of interest among India's myriads'. Its purpose was to symbolise "sacrifice for the whole nation". To the charges of narrow provincialism and dangers of his kind of nationalism he pointed out: "I hope I am as great a believer in free air as the great poet. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any". Furthermore, Gandhi did not regard his patriotism to be exclusive; "it is calculated not only to hurt any other nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom as conceived by me can never be a menace to the world" (cited in Dalton *ibid*: 202-03). Tagore too shared the same attitude toward cultural diversity but was more cautious than Gandhi for his perception of the possible decay and degeneration as he saw in the later developments at the time of the partition of Bengal in 1905.

Rolland characterised Tagore's revolt against Gandhi as "the revolt of the free soul" (1976: 64). C.F. Andrews expressed similar views about Tagore. Nehru wrote in 1961 "Tagore's article *The Call of Truth* and Gandhi's reply in his weekly *Young India* which he called 'The Great Sentinel' made wonderful reading. They represent two aspects of the truth, neither of which could be ignored" (Dalton *ibid*: 204). Tagore's role was that of a critical but sympathetic observer of the nationalist upsurge in India, which he wanted to be based both on reason and a concern for the masses. He criticised Gandhi whenever he felt that the Mahatma was deviating from these planks. He not only criticised but also provided an alternative perception to that of Gandhi. He acknowledges his greatness and lauded his role in fighting casteism, untouchability and communalism but was equally forthright in pointing out the limitations of the Gandhian schemes. For instance he criticised Mahatma's basic education scheme of 1937 popularly known as the *Wardha Scheme* on two grounds. First, he questioned the desirability of the precedence of material utility over development of personality. Second, the scheme of a special type of education for the rural poor would limit the choice of their vocation and that it is "unfortunate that even in our ideal scheme education should be doled out in insufficient rations to the poor". He identified the lack of basic education as the fundamental cause of many of India's social and economic afflictions and desired lively and enjoyable schools.

Tagore had the courage of conviction to point out the inadequacies of Mahatma's vision. Since some of his criticisms are well founded, it is time to work out a synthesis with the experience of last five decades particularly in the major areas of our shortcomings like rural reconstruction, education and provide the requisite incentive for the rural poor to lead a decent and dignified life.

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## **13.6 ANALYSIS OF BOLSHEVISM**

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Tagore visited Europe and the United States several times but he went to the USSR only once when he was seventy years old and considered the trip a pilgrimage and felt that had he not gone his life would have remained incomplete. The trip was for two weeks only and he could not go anywhere else except to be in Moscow. The *Letters from Russia* expressed his recollections of the Soviet Union. It is not a travelogue but a reflective account of what he saw and what he liked and disliked. Most of the letters were written after he left the

Soviet Union. Before going there, an interesting incident took place in Tokyo, where a young man from Korea entered into a conversation with Tagore which the latter recorded himself. The questions and answers revolved around the emergence of the new Soviet society. In this conversation, the Korean emphasised on the question of the animosity between the rich and the poor and the inevitability of the revolution. After a few months of this conversation, Tagore went to the Soviet Union. He was not as overwhelmed as the Korean young man as he had serious doubts about the new culture being propagated by the new socialist regime. He praised the Soviet efforts of creating a new society giving rights to ordinary people and for starting collective enterprises in important areas like education, agriculture, health and industry.

Tagore attributed the widespread human suffering as the cause for the rise of Bolshevism but subsequently denounced the regime's use of violence, cruelty and repressive brutality. Its forced harmony was based on uncertain foundations. The contact between the leader and the followers was elusive and imperfect and a constant source of trouble. Added to this "the habit of passive following weakens the mind and character. Its very success defeats itself". In repudiating violence there is a similarity in the outlook between Tagore and Gandhi. Both distanced themselves from the Bolshevik practice mainly because of its glorification and practice of violence.

Tagore appreciated the fact that the Bolsheviks had ended many of the evil practices of the Czarist regime except one important practice, that of suppression of opinion and advised the Bolsheviks to end this evil. He was always against unquestioned allegiance, which was one of his criticisms of Gandhi's leadership in India. He, as a believer in the importance of freedom of mind, could easily see the dangers of suppression of dissidence and alternative points of view within the Soviet system. He was against the preaching of anger and class hatred, which the Soviets taught and that any good society must acknowledge the existence of difference of opinion through freedom of expression. His primary interest was with the new educational system and he was pleased with the vigour with which it spread throughout the Russian society. The achievement was not only numerical but also in its intensity creating a sense of self-respect. However, his insights did not miss its major defects as it turned the system into a mould whereas humanity is a living mind and that "either the mould will burst into pieces or man's mind will be paralysed to death or man will be turned into a mechanical doll". He looked to Bolshevism as a medical treatment for a sick society and could not conceive of it being a permanent feature of a civilised society. He commented "indeed the day on which the doctor's regime comes to an end must be hailed as a red letter day for the patient".

Tagore's account of the Soviet Union was a balanced one, which highlighted both the negative and positive aspects. In this respect he compared more favourably with H.G. Wells rather than with Sidney and Beatrice Webb who also visited the Soviet Union in the 1930s. The Webbs, unlike Wells, ignored the negative aspects of the Soviet society.

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## 13.7 SUMMARY

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Tagore was a pragmatic idealist and as Mulk Raj Anand wrote:

...a visionary who believed that in sentiment a multinational civilisation was the way through

which individuals and nations might surrender their power. He knew as an Indian, that in actual fact, several of the potentially freedom-loving nations were handicapped by the numerous aggressive nations built on greed and plunder. So he struggled against the imperialists of his day with a resilience that lends to his political thought a peculiar realism as well as a visionary quality (1967: 31).

He did not merely contemplate but tried to experiment and put his ideas in practice. Armed with courage of convictions he raised his voice against the cult of nationalism, about inequality among nations, imperialism including cultural imperialism and about lack of freedom in the colonial world where the majority lead deprived lives. He never lost hope in human rationality and thought as Plato did that education holds the key to human excellence and a better future. Amartya Sen aptly pointed out "Rabindranath insisted on open debate on every issue, and distrusted conclusions based on a mechanical formula, no matter how attractive that formula might seem in isolation.... The question he persistently asked it whether we have reason enough to want what is being proposed, taking everything into account. Important as history is, reasoning has to go beyond the past. It is in the sovereignty of reasoning- fearless reasoning in freedom- that we can find Rabindranath Tagore's lasting voice"

The mechanism of globalisation is a new device to perpetuate the spirit of domination and exploitation of the older imperial times rather than make an attempt to create a new partnership among nations and its people based on equality and shared prosperity. It is because of the perpetuation of an outmoded and short-sighted policy of the advanced countries that the philosophy of universal brotherhood has been relegated to a secondary status. The process of globalisation continues with what Tagore accused the West of demonstrating its strength but not its liberating power. Utiles and until this is rectified the West would continue to be held as suspect by nearly eighty percent of the people of the world. If peace and order are to be realised the humanistic side of the West has to come to the forefront. This would be possible only if the West sheds its narrow nationalistic concerns as stressed by Tagore. He hoped for the triumph of humanism, reason and science with the West showing the way. In the background of the two World Wars and the increasing realisation that for a continued peaceful evolution of the global village there is a need for a universal minimum in defining the good and the desirable and in mitigating the division between the privileged and the underprivileged, Tagore's critique could become the starting point of this rectification, and one which is long overdue.

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## 13.8 EXERCISES

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1. Discuss Rabindranath Tagore's idea of freedom and self realisation.
2. Explain Tagore's critique of nationalism.
3. Discuss and distinguish the basic disagreement between Tagore and Gandhi.
4. Evaluate Tagore's views on Bolshevism,

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# UNIT 14 COMMUNIST THOUGHT: M N ROY AND E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD

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## Structure

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Evolution of Communist Movement in India
- 14.3 The Establishment of Communist Party
- 14.4 The Communist Party of India before Independence
- 14.5 The Communist Party of India after independence
  - 14.5.1 Towards Parliamentary Strategy
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- 14.6 M N Roy: From Marxism to Radical Humanism
  - 14.6.1 Roy's Marxism
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- 14.7 E M S Namboodiripad: The Communist Theoretician
  - 14.7.1 Marxist Leninist Theory
  - 14.7.2 On Caste Conflicts
  - 14.7.3 National Unity
  - 14.7.4 Strategy of Indian Revolution
  - 14.7.5 Indian History
- 14.8 Summary
- 14.9 Exercises

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## 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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Communist thought in India has its origins in the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and their followers. The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 had a tremendous impact on the entire world. The social democratic parties, reflecting the thoughts of Marx and Engels, had already been established in the major countries in Europe. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia created the erstwhile Soviet Union and the communist parties came to be established in various parts of the world, especially in Asia, Africa and the Latin American countries for strengthening the on-going liberation struggles and providing a boost to the spread of communist thought.

The Indian Communist Party was established in 1924 and worked in close association with

communist movements guided and inspired by the Communist International also called the Comintern. M N Roy, with his characteristic Marxian views, influenced the world communist movement, though he was disillusioned by communism in later life. The Indian Communist Leader and Theoretician EMS Namboodiripad kept holding the red flag till the end of his life. Communist thought in India is an interesting account of the development of the Marxian thought and philosophy as it grew in the Indian conditions.

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## 14.2 EVOLUTION OF COMMUNIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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The communist movement in India drew on the basic tenets of Marxism by accepting the Marxist analysis of dialectical materialism and the materialist interpretation of history. As such, the socio-economic cultural evolution period has been interpreted by the Indian Communists in terms of the sociology of class struggle. Like all the Marxists, the Indian communists together with the other communists, believe in the destruction of capitalism and the eventual establishment of a socialist/communist society. The Indian Communists regard imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, just the way Lenin did. In India, the communists believe and in fact, propagate that the working class in alliance with the other toiling masses is alone capable of bringing about the socialist revolution. They also believe in proletarian internationalism.

The communist movement in India, thus, has its intellectual and ideological roots in the philosophy of Marxism. The Indian Marxists not only accept Marxism, but also interpret the Indian socio-political developments in the Marxian style; at times, the interpretation seems imposed while at others, it becomes a victim of oversimplification. They accept the following Marxist formulations as gospels beyond any doubt:

- i) The state and society are distinct entities: the type of society dictates the type of state. Accordingly, the state is not independent of society; its relationship with society is that of a superstructure and a base.
- ii) The state is an instrument of the society: those who control the society also control the state; the state is the state of the dominant class.
- iii) The state, in a class society, is also a class institution and as such seeks to establish the values of society. The capitalist state is the state of the capitalists, by them and for them.
- iv) In a capitalist society, the working class will organise itself and will seek to overthrow the capitalist society; in the pre-capitalist society, the workers along with the capitalists could overthrow the feudal society.
- v) With the abolition of the capitalist class society, there would usher the classless socialist society, which with its political organ – the dictatorship of the proletariat – would establish socialism and pave way for a classless – stateless communist society.
- vi) In the struggle for liberation, the socialist forces all over the world would support the colonial-exploited people in their conflict against the capitalist – imperialist society.
- vii) At first, the struggle between the colonial people and the imperialist state first, and thereafter, the struggle between the socialist states and the capitalist states would end in the victory of socialism.

The Indian communist writers/scholars, have made significant contributions at the level of theoretical construction. They have tried to apply the concepts and propositions of historical materialism to the studies of Indian history and philosophy. Their analysis of the Indian situation of past and present has been instructive, though with loopholes here and exaggerations there.

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### **14.3 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNIST PARTY**

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The Communist Party of India was founded in September, 1924 possibly at the initiative of Satya Bhakta of Uttar Pradesh. There were only 78 members belonging to the Indian Communist Party at the time of its foundation. Later the membership rose to 250. Muzaffar Ahmed (The Communist Party of India and its Foundation Abroad) holds that the Communist Party of India was founded abroad and was affiliated with the Communist International. He states that the Communist Party was formed towards the end of 1920 at the Tashkent Military School. David Druha thinks that the Communist Party was founded in 1921 at Tashkent. In December, 1929 a communist conference was held at Kanpur, and was chaired by M. Singaravelu Chettiar where a resolution was adopted calling for the formation of a Communist Party of India (CPI) with the headquarters in Bombay.

Some differences emerged within the Communist Party in relation to its link with the Communist International. Although the Communist Party of India was not legally a component of the Communist International, its ties with the international revolutionary movement were nevertheless being consolidated. There were closer links with the Communist Party of Great Britain. Its delegation of George Allison and Philip Spratt came to India in 1926-27.

The communists, much before the formation of the legal Communist Party of India, had associated themselves with the liberation struggle. The Kanpur Conspiracy Case in 1924, was decided against the communist leaders – S A Dange, Nalini Gupta, Muzaffar Ahmed and Shaukat Usmani – awarding them imprisonment. In the conspiracy case, in 1920, more than two dozens of communists leaders including S A Dange, S V Ghote, Joglekar, Nimbalkar, Mirojkar, Shaukat Usmani, Philip Spratt, Bradly, Muzaffar Ahmed were involved, and they were all sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The Communist Party of India, by 1928-29 had set before itself the goal of creating a mass-scale revolutionary organisation and an anti-imperialist alliance. The sixth world Congress of the Communist International, in September 1928, had passed a resolution to strengthen the communist parties and the trade union organisations in the colonial countries and warned such bodies against the national-reformist bourgeois organisations, including the temporary agreements with them over agitations launched against imperialistic forces.

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### **14.4 THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA BEFORE INDEPENDENCE**

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Years after its formation, the Communist Party of India sought to strengthen its position in the trade unions, organising them, guiding them and propagating Marxism and Leninism so as to prepare them for revolutionary struggle against the nationalist bourgeoisie and the imperialistic- capitalistic forces. In the sphere of trade union movement, the Communist



Party of India (CPI) did achieve definite success by making inroads in the workers' bodies. Therefore, in the 1930s, it was able to have its influence among the peasants and workers. As the labour movement gained ground, the activities of the workers, peasants, and political parties, including the CPI became more intensified.

In the 1930's, the CPI adopted a United Front from above by aligning itself with the nationalist movement, but it kept its separate identity among the workers and the peasants. The CPI, as it was a banned organisation, came closer to the Congress and numerous communists joined the Indian National Congress (INC) and formed socialist group within the congress, which came to be known as the Congress Socialist Party (CSP). They remained in the Congress until 1939 when they were expelled on the issue of double membership.

With the axis power Germany invading the Soviet Union in 1941 during World War II, and with the Soviet Union joining the Allied powers, the situation of the Indian Communists became precarious. The ban on the CPI by the Britishers in India was lifted and the CPI which was until then, considering the 1939 war bourgeois war, began not only suffering the war, but also declared it as the people's war against the fascists. The CPI did not support the 1942 Quit India Movement. Professor Verma (Modern Indian Political Thought) has stated that when the Congress leaders (following the 1942 Quit India Resolution) were in jail and the foreign government was following a ruthless policy of repression, suppression and terrorisation of all nationalist forces, the communists strengthened themselves and claimed to have 30,000 members while, in 1942, the party had only 2500 members. During the War, the communists cleverly established their control over the All India Trade Union Congress also.

The communists were divided over the question of independence of the country which was only a couple of months away, especially after the formation of the interim government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru. They were plagued by questions such as: Was the country really free? Was the transfer of power notional or real? Should the CPI support Nehru's Congress? In the debate within the CPI, P C Joshi thought that the transfer of power and independence were real and that the Nehru Government should be supported. On the other hand, B T Ranadive and Dr. Adhikari held the view that independence was not real and that real independence could be achieved only under the leadership of the CPI and that the CPI, instead of supporting the Nehru Congress Government, should fight against it. The opposite view also believed, in harmony with the Soviet theory, that India only appeared to be independent within the framework of a modified imperialistic system. That is why in the second party congress held in Kolkatta (1948), the CPI accepted Stalin's view of two camps: the capitalist and the communist, and therefore attacked imperialism, feudalism as well as the bourgeois Congress. B T Ranadive replaced P C Joshi as the General Secretary of the CPI.

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## **14.5 THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE**

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### **14.5.1 Towards Parliamentary Strategy**

With relatively a more militant left, the CPI immediately after independence, adopted a United Front tactic from below: aligning itself with the workers and peasants against the Indian National Congress. Now the CPI strategy was on course of a revolution – with

strikes, sabotage and violence. For Ranadive, following the Soviet Line, the working class was an instrument of revolution. He discounted the peasant uprising in the Telangana Region, much to the annoyance of the Andhra Pradesh communists, even at the cost of losing office of the General Secretary of the CPI. Rajeshwar Rao became the General Secretary of the CII in 1950.

With the shift of the Nehru Government towards the former Soviet Union, the CPI was officially advised to abandon 'adventurous' tactics and to adopt the policy of contesting Parliamentary Elections. Moderates like PC Joshi, S A Dange and Ajoy Ghosh welcomed the policy shift and the politburo of the Central Committee drew up a draft calling for the creation of a broad anti-feudal and anti-imperialistic front embracing the national bourgeoisie. The path of the parliamentary strategy was clear; Ajoy Ghosh became the General Secretary of the CPI in 1951.

The CPI moved, from 1950 onwards to a process of gradual change- from a class conflict approach to class alliance, from revolutionary strategy to parliamentary strategy. The 1957 Lok Sabha elections saw the victory of the Communist Party of India in Kerala and later on, forming the Government. The 5<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress of the CPI held in Amritsar (April, 1958) maintained that though it was not possible to achieve success through peaceful and democratic means, yet the parliamentary road to socialism was not altogether infeasible.

#### **14.5.2 Towards Divisions From Within**

The dismissal of the Kerala Communist Government in 1959 made the CPI's relations with the Congress strained. The Chinese invasion of India in 1962 made polarisation rather evident in the CII beyond any repair. The right faction, headed by S A Dange recognised the Indian claims to the territories occupied by the Chinese in 1962; the left faction of the CPI regarded the right's plea as a betrayal of the international proletarian unity. A centrist group led by EMS Namboodiripad and Ajoy Ghosh blamed both the Indian and the Chinese leaders for the border conflict. In 1962, the balancer, Ajoy Ghosh died; Dange became the Chairman of the CPI and EMS Namboodiripad, the General Secretary; it was however a short lived unity. As the split of the International Communist movement became clear with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China taking opposing stands, the division of the CPI could no longer be delayed; the CII came closer to the former USSR and the CPI (Marxist), to the People's Republic of China.

The Soviet Union recognised the CPI as India's legitimate Communist Party; the CPI attributed the split to the Chinese machination. The CPI (M), though neutral on the ideology issue, came to be dubbed as hostile to the Soviet position. But even the Chinese distanced themselves from the CPI (M).

The two communist parties remained divided on certain issues. The CPI, by adopting the national democratic front strategy thought of aligning itself with the Indian National Congress, which the CPI regarded as the vehicle of "bourgeois" nationalism. The CPI (M), by adopting the people's democratic government strategy thought of remaining away from the Congress which it regarded as an anathema. In the coming years, the CPI came to be associated with the congress and its laurels and failures came to be counted with those of the congress. The congress began losing ground, votes and legislative seats after 1977, exception being the brief

spell in 1980; so did the CPI. In the meantime, the CPI (M) became popular both with the urban and rural poor and was successful in forming governments in Kerala and West Bengal.

### **14.5.3 Towards Co-operation of the Communist Forces**

Ideologically, the two communist parties remained apart; the CPI aligning with nationalist-bourgeois forces while the CPI (M) working its own strategy of people's democratic government. On the question of Sino-Soviet differences, the CPI supported the Soviet Union and the CPI (M), while disapproving the Soviet Position, did not however support China either. On the border issue between India and China, the CPI's position is that the Chinese should vacate the Indian territories while the CPI (M) favours a mutually agreed formula on the border issue.

With the CPI on the decline, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a single state, the two communist parties are drawing close to each other, and, now coming up with a United Front election manifesto. In fact, the two communist parties have not had much of differences on economic demands. Both condemn the monopoly-capitalistic strategy; both disapprove of the role of multi-national companies in India's economy; both seek to strengthen socialist measures; both demand social security legislation in favour of the workers and the peasants. Both, in general, are functioning, in spite of their revolutionary –Marxist basis, primarily as socialist-oriented democratic parties within the parliamentary democratic frame work.

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## **14.6 M N ROY: FROM MARXISM TO RADICAL HUMANISM**

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Manvendra Nath Roy (1887-1954), whose original name was Narendra Nath Bhattacharya had the unique distinction of having worked with Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. He began his political life as a militant nationalist, believing in the cult of the bomb and the pistol and the necessity of armed insurrection. The futility of this path made him a socialist and then a communist. He joined the Communist International, but was thrown out of it as he differed from its aim of being a movement all over the world.

Roy passed through three phases in his career. In the first phase, which lasted up to 1919, he was a national revolutionary, smuggling arms for the terrorists of Bengal. In the second phase, Roy was a Marxist engaged in active communist movement first in Mexico and then in Russia, China and India. In the last and final phase, Roy emerged as a radical humanist, completing his journey from Nationalism to Communism and from Communism to Radical Humanism. He was in his student life, a revolutionary as well as an intellectual. He had a zest for new ideas and a quest for freedom. This is how he drifted from Marxism towards Radicalism. Marxism and Radicalism constitute the characteristics of his philosophy.

### **14.6.1 Roy's Marxism**

Roy's baptism as a Marxist began in Mexico in 1917 where, along with Boshodin, he accepted Marxism as a philosophy for excellence. He accepted all the major tenets of Marxism and sought to interpret the Indian situation along Marxist lines. This is evident from the following:

- i) Roy submitted his thesis on Colonial Revolution at the Second Congress of the Communist

International in 1920. To him, world capitalism was drawing its main strength of modern European capitalism and so long as the latter was not deprived of this source of super profit, it would not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order. Thus, he concluded that the revolutionary movement in Europe was absolutely dependent on the course of revolution in India and other Asian Countries. In order to overthrow foreign capitalism, it was advisable to make use of the co-operation of the bourgeois nationalist elements, but only in the initial stages. The foremost task was to form a communist party to organise peasants and workers and lead them to revolution. If, from the outset, the leadership is in the hands of a communist vanguard, the revolutionary masses will be on the right road towards their goal and they will gradually achieve revolutionary experience.

- ii) Roy gave a Marxist interpretation to Indian history. Its main features were gradual decay of the rural economy, steady rise of capitalism, the conquest of India by the British bourgeois to capture new markets, to find new fields of exploitation and export of capital. The 1857 uprising was the last effort of the de-throned feudal potentates to regain their power; Indian National Congress was the organisation of intellectual bourgeois to carry out their political struggle and to facilitate economic development. Colonial exploitation prevented the normal economic development of India and the working class was too backward to fight for socialism.
- iii) Roy does not identify Marxism with communism; Marxism is a philosophy while communism is a political practice. Roy believed in socialisation of the process of production. When labour is performed collectively, its product must be collectively owned. Private property must cease to be an economic necessity before it can be abolished. Roy rejects the dictum that dictatorship of the proletariat is necessary to achieve communism. He believes that a revolution cannot be made to order. In an industrially backward country like India, the establishment of proletariat dictatorship cannot be envisaged. In India such a thing cannot happen; nor did he agree with the idea of 'withering away of the state'.
- iv) Roy foresaw two things in establishing socialism in India – an agrarian revolution and building up of modern industry under the control of a really democratic state. Roy did not consider socialism an immediate issue for India. Socialism was not a matter of desire for him. It was a matter of necessity. Socialism becomes a historical necessity when majority feels a necessity for it.

The introduction of the mechanical means of production on a large scale, the abolition of pre-capitalist restrictions on production, and the attainment of certain minimum economic level are the historic pre-conditions for establishing socialism. A socialist India could not be built overnight. The problem of transition to socialism in India had two parts viz., (1) achievement of free Indian democracy and (2) Transformation of the social order into a socialist democracy. Roy gave precedence to political freedom over economic freedom and socialism.

## 14.6.2 Humanist Critique of Marxism

According to Roy, Marx's theory of class struggle has subordinated individual consciousness. He was also critical of Marx giving too much prominence to the working class. To him, polarisation of capitalist society into the exploiting and the working class never takes place. The middle class does not disappear. It is the middle class which produces revolutionaries. Lenin recognised this fact, but failed to recognise the middle class as a class. Thus, Roy denounced the theory of class struggle. Society could never survive without some kind of a social cohesive force and as such, class struggle cannot be the only reality. Roy considered

the proletariat as the 'most backward stratum of the society'. He gave a place of pride to the middle class and the individual. He also denounced the theory of dictatorship of the proletariat as this would establish totalitarianism. Revolutions cannot bring about miracles. What was needed was a judicious synthesis of rationalism and romanticism. As a radical humanist, he thought that revolution was to be brought about not through class struggle or armed violence, but through proper education. Revolution would not bring about any sudden change. He also did not agree with Marxian economic interpretation of history as it had many flaws. For Roy, the biological urge of self-preservation preceded the economic motive of earning a livelihood. He criticised the Marxian dialectics, The evolution of democracy to socialism was a continuous process, and not a dialectical process.

Roy did not regard surplus value as a peculiar feature of capitalism. The creation of surplus value and the accumulation of capital were also necessary in a socialist society. The only difference between a socialist society, unlike a capitalist society, was that the surplus value was not appropriated by a particular class.

Roy made very serious observations about India's polity. He remarked that the Indian traditions of leadership lend themselves to authoritarianism. Leader is considered infallible. The presence of a charismatic leadership indicates the fascist tendency in the Indian politics. One may agree with Roy that India lacks a democratic tradition and the existence of a peculiar social structure and the tendency to hero worship makes for authoritarian tradition. His warning about the Fascist danger in the Indian politics has proved to be true.

Roy feels that no country's interests are ever served or promoted by war. He welcomed the U.N. as a positive step towards world peace. He also suggested the idea of a world government because a world composed of national states can never have peace. Roy's conception of peace was based on a humanist foundation. This can be attained through mutual trust, and cooperation. It presupposes a unity of outlook and a community of interest among people without national and class differences. Reason and persuasion are the foundations on which lasting peace can be built.

While discussing Roy's philosophy of New Humanism, his approach to the radical democratic state/in terms of a co-operative common-wealth has to be analysed. This problem involved the reconciliation of the concept of direct democracy with the ideal of cooperative state. Roy was optimistic about it. He said "Even in large political units and highly complex social organisation of the modern world, direct democracy will be possible in the form of a network of small cooperative common wealth". He envisaged its evolution through voluntary efforts. Its function would be subject to enlighten the public opinion and intelligent public actions. The idea is also based on the cooperative aspect of human nature. To achieve the democratic spirit and outlook, Roy emphasised on the education. Education for democracy consists in making the people conscious of their rights to exist as human beings in decency and dignity. It helps them to think and to exercise their rational judgement. This would also make democratic institutions vibrant, where universal suffrage is given. He did not agree with state managed education, as it creates 'a high degree of conformism and subservience to an established order'. Roy also visualises a polity in which economic democracy and political democracy support each other. He recognises planning with freedom.

### 14.6.3 Roy's Radical Humanism

In the later years of his life, Roy became an exponent of "New Humanism". He distinguished this from other humanist philosophy and termed it radical. Though Roy is influenced in his approach by the scientific materialism of Hobbes, Ethics of Spinoza and Secular politics as propounded by Locke, he reconciled all these to propound a rational idea of freedom with the concept of necessity. The central purpose of Roy's Radical Humanism is to co-ordinate the philosophy of nature with social philosophy and ethics in a monistic system. "It is for this reason that Roy claims it as humanist as well as materialist, naturalist as well as nationalist, creativist as well as determinist".

- i) Roy's idea revolves around Man. "It is the man who creates society, state and other institutions and values for his own welfare. Man has the power to change them for his greater welfare and convenience. His belief lies in "Man as the measure of everything". As a radical Humanist, his philosophical approach is individualistic. The individual should not be subordinated either to a nation or to a class. The individual should not lose his identity in the collective ego of such notions. Man's being and becoming, his emotions, will and ideas determine his life style. He has two basic traits, one, reason and the other, the urge for freedom. The reason in man echoes the harmony of the universe. He states that every human behaviour, in the last analysis, is rational, though it may appear as irrational. Man tries to find out the laws of nature in order to realise his freedom. This urge for freedom leads him to a search for knowledge. He considers freedom to be of supreme value. While rationality provides dynamism to a man, the urge for freedom gives him direction. The interaction of reason and freedom leads to the expression of cooperative spirit as manifested in social relationship. Thus, Roy's radical humanism culminates into cooperative individualism. Roy's conception of human nature becomes the basis of society and state. He attributes their origin to the act of man for promoting his freedom and material satisfaction.
- ii) Roy presents a communal pattern of social growth. Groups of human beings settled down in particular localities for the cultivation and the organisation of society, Each group marks out an area as its collective domain. The ownership is common because land is cultivated by the labour of the entire community. The fruits of collective labour belong to all collectively. But this does not last long. With the origin of private property, there arises the necessity of some authority to govern the new relations, This gives birth to the state. Roy defines state as 'The political organisation of society'. The rise of the state is neither the result of social contract, nor was it ever super-imposed on society. The evolution of the state is not only historical, but also natural. It was a spontaneous process promoted almost mechanically, by the common regulation of the necessity of co-operation for the security of all concerned, for the administration of public affairs. Roy is aware of the coercive character of the state. He blames it on more and more concentration of power in a few qualified administrators enjoying full authority to rule, He criticises it and wants to reshape the state on the basis of the principles of pluralism, decentralisation and democracy. For him, the state must exist and discharge its limited functions along with other equally important and autonomous social institutions. He reduces the functions of the state to the minimum. He pleaded for decentralisation where maximum possible autonomy should be granted to the local units,
- iii) Roy was a supporter of not only a democracy where every citizen will be informed and consulted about affairs of the state, but also of radical democracy as well. Such a democracy will neither suffer from the inadequacies of formal parliamentary democracy, nor will it allow the dangers of dictatorship of any class or elite. The basic feature of the radical democracy is that the people must have the ways and means to exercise sovereign power effectively. Power would

be so distributed that maximum power would be vested in local democracy and minimum at the apex.

- iv) Roy also contemplated an economic reorganisation of the society in which there would be no exploitation of man by man. It would be a planned society which would maximise individual freedom. This is possible when society is established on the basis of cooperation and decentralisation.
- v) Education would be important in Radical democracy. As a radical humanist, Roy came to believe that a revolution should be brought about not through class struggle or armed violence, but through education.
- vi) Roy emphasised the concept of moral man. To him politics cannot be divorced from ethics. Roy traces morality to rationality in man. Reason is the only sanction for morality, Without moral men, there can be no moral society. Moral values are those principles which a man should observe for his own welfare and for the proper working of society.
- vii) He advocates humanist politics. This will lead to purification and rationalisation of politics. Today, man is debased to the level of an unthinking beast power politics. To him, politics can be practiced without power. "Party politics has given rise to power politics". To him any party government can, at best, be for the people, but it is never of the people and by the people. In a country like India, he laments about the evils of party politics that exist, where ignorant conservative people are exploited in the elections. Thus, he favoured the abolition of the party system which will enable politics to operate without an incentive of power. In the absence of that corrupting agency, morality in political practice would be possible.
- viii) Roy's social order rises with the support of enlightening public opinion as well as intelligent action of the people. Roy stands for 'Revolution by Consent'. He concedes the right of the people to resist tyranny and oppression, but he rules out the use of violent methods. Today, the modern state is too powerful to be overthrown. Lastly, according to Roy, "One cannot be a revolutionary without possessing a scientific knowledge. The world stands in need of change. Science has given confidence to a growing number of human beings, that they possess the power to remake the world, Thus, education becomes the essence and condition of revolution and re-construction, Revolution by consent does not operate through the politics of power, but through the politics of freedom".

To conclude, Roy's learning is indeed impressive. He has written a six thousand page book, 'The Philosophical consequences of modern science'. His book, 'Reason, Romanticism and Revolution' is a significant contribution to political thought by an Indian writer. While India has embarked upon the path of parliamentary democracy, in its neighbourhood, many countries were swamped by some form of totalitarianism. He was an Ethical Revisionist in the history of socialist thought. He began his academic pursuits as a Marxist, but gradually almost completely restated all the prepositions of Marx. He gave a moral restatement of Marxism. Roy's application of the Marxist concepts and generalisations to the structure and processes of the Indian economy and society seem thought provoking and enlightening.

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## **14.7 E M S NAMBOODIRIPAD: THE COMMUNIST THEORETICIAN**

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Ernakulam Manakkal Sankaran Namboodiripad (1909-1998) was one of the architects of

United Kerala, a renowned, brave and committed socialist, historian and Marxian theoretician who took an active part in the communist movement of India. He was born in Perinthala Manna Taluk of the present Malapuram District. His early years were associated with U T Bhattathripad and many others. He became one of the office bearers of "Yogaskshema Sabha", an organisation of progressive youth. During his college days, he was associated with the Indian National Congress and the struggle for freedom. In 1934 he joined the Congress Socialist Party and was later elected as the Kerala State Congress Secretary. Namboodiripad was widely regarded as the most intellectually sophisticated politician who continued to be a major influence in the politics of Kerala and South India throughout the 1970s. The two principal C.P.M. leaders, Jyoti Basu and Namboodiripad are among the most highly regarded active political leaders in India. They dominated the party since the 1964 split from the CPI and their prominence has attracted a highly competent younger group of leaders. They belong to the C.P.M. party which is influenced by the former Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.

E.M.S Namboodiripad belonged to the more militant wing of the Communist Party. He was deeply disturbed by the fiercely anti-Chinese foreign policy the congress had adopted after the Sino-Indian border war in 1962 and by the Congress role in overthrowing the C.P.I led government in Kerala in 1959.

E M S Namboodiripad supports the idea that the Maoist notion of a peasant based revolution was more relevant to the Indian situation than the worker based ideas of Marx and Lenin. He remained committed to the Socialist ideas and his compassion towards the downtrodden working class made him join the ranks of the communist, for which he had to also go in hiding for many years. India achieved its independence in 1947 and the state of Kerala was formed in 1956. In 1957, E M S Namboodiripad led the communists to victory in the first popular election in the state. Soon he introduced the revolutionary land reforms ordinance and the education bill, which actually caused the dismissal of his government. E M S Namboodiripad has been a strong supporter of decentralisation of power and resources and the Kerala literacy movement as well.

EMS Namboodiripad was described by the *Frontline magazine* as a "Thinker, ....., History Maker, the tallest communist leader India has seen, an anti - imperialist and freedom fighter, social reformer, writer, journalist, and theoretician." K R Narayanan, the then President of India described him as "a man of rare vision, acumen and determination. A scholar, historian and journalist, he was above all an educator of the people as well as their leaders. Interestingly, for the last several decades, he analysed the socio-political scene from the firm-rootedness of his intellectual position and enriched Indian political thought to his very last days". "It was certainly", the CPI General Secretary Bardhan said, "Namboodiripad's ideology that shaped Kerala the way it is to-day. The thoughts and writings of EMS have influenced a generation of communists. We all have read EMS we have listened to EMS. We have fought against EMS. We have rallied behind EMS. We have stood for EMS and stood against him. But we could never ignore EMS".

As a true Marxist-Leninist, EMS Namboodiripad emancipated the rural poor and the wage earner keeping in view the peculiar Indian conditions; land reforms were a great characteristic of EMS' communist ideology. He got the land reforms by way of legislation and by



strengthening the Kisan Movement which addressed itself to the problems concerning small landholders and agricultural labour.

For a person of his calibre, the growth of individual capital in India in general and Kerala in particular depended, as EMS Namboodiripad thought, on the growth of consciousness of the people in favour of material production. EMS Namboodiripad favoured industrialisation via the private sector. He said 'because the possibility of industrialisation through the public sector was not very bright in Kerala, so we brought the private sector from outside'.

Namboodiripad was a great communist theoretician who tried to relate the Marxian principles to the Indian realities. In the process, he made his own Marxist interpretation to the Indian situation. That he stood for the toiling masses, the rural labourers, and the exploited workers is a fact of history. But he, as a centrist of the Marxian ideology, favoured the socio-economic changes in the peculiar Indian conditions existing then. In agriculture, his method was cooperativisation; in industry, it was first the introduction of industrialisation and thereafter, its socialisation.

Namboodiripad, like a true Marxist, believed that Marxism was not a static ideology; under different circumstances, its interpretations can be different and for bringing about socio-economic changes, its strategy also differs in different conditions. That was why, to take an out of the context instance, EMS Namboodiripad believed that after the developments in the former Soviet Union following the 1989 years, there could be no restoration of Soviet Communism, and that communism would have to absorb significant postulates of other ideologies.

The conflicting trends among various segments of the Communist party in India were because of competing ideological influences from native and alien social structures. Analysing it beautifully, Namboodiripad said, "The conflict here was between an outdated decadent indigenous social system and a foreign social system that was being newly evolved. While, on the one side, one section is eager to build a new society, another section is eager to protect its own land and the ancient customs and traditions characteristic of it. It is only through introducing the essence of modern society that came to the country through the foreigners, and modernising our society can we protect our country from attack by foreigners."

Some of the leading members of the Communist party were in favour of having a common front with the Congress party. G. Adhikari was of the view that in order to build a strong national democratic movement and to prevent disruption in the Communist party, it was desirable to cooperate with the left-wing forces of the Congress party. The decision regarding this was also taken up by the Vijayawada Congress of the party. The conference took a decision to develop an approach of struggle and unity which will enable the organisation to unite the democratic forces "following the parties of democratic opposition. Namboodiripad was not in favour of this line in politics. Commenting on Namboodiripad's attitude, Adhikari said, "His (Namboodiripad's) bland subjective hatred for the leadership of the majority has led him to propound theories which serve as an alibi for the left-opportunist line."

Namboodiripad rejected the approach of People's Democracy of the Leftists. He said, "The origin and development of the inner-party differences which have led to the split of the party,

should be traced not to the evil intentions, misdeeds of certain individual leaders, but to certain objective factors."

A majority of the members of the CPI (M) were very much critical of the Congress government under Nehru for its decision to overthrow the Namboodiripad's government in Kerala. According to Lenin, "It would be a profound error to think that the revolutionary proletariat is capable of "refusing "to support the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks against counter-revolution by way of revenge, so to speak, for the support they have given in smashing the Bolsheviks, in shooting down soldiers at the front and in disarming the workers. First this would be applying philistine conceptions of morality to the proletariat. (since, for the good of the cause, the proletariat will always support not only the vacillating petty bourgeoisie but also the big bourgeoisie); secondly – and that is the important thing – it would be philistine attempt to obscure the political substance of the situation by 'moralising'.

There has been no consistent ideological approach among the leaders of both the Communist parties – CPI and CPI(M). Regarding the merger of both these parties, Namboodiripad's vacillating attitude created a lot of confusion. The old slogan of 'non-capitalist path of development' as applied to India was abandoned by the CPI in its Fourteenth Congress in Calcutta in 1989. It put emphasis on the anti-imperialist, anti-federal and anti-monopoly approach of the party towards the contemporary issues. One also observes distinct divergent approaches by the Left leaders in the CPI(M) on the international issues. For example, in the Thirteenth Congress of the CPI (M) in Trivandrum in 1989, Namboodiripad fully advocated the policies of the Mikhail Gorbachev administration whereas another important leader B.T.Ranadive was very critical of it.

After having these references about Namboodiripad , it would be advisable to have a brief analysis of some of his ideas and attitudes regarding Marxist-Leninist theory, Indian history, caste and politics in India, national integration and unity and the like. Namboodiripad was one of the leading theoreticians and Left leaders of the Communist movement in India. His association with the Left movement in the country over four decades was a blessing for the left and democratic movement. Let us have a brief over view of some of his ideas.

### **14.7.1 Marxist Leninist Theory**

According to Namboodiripad, the First World War marked the beginning of the end of capitalist domination over the nation-state systems in different parts of the world. With the victory of the Communism in the October Revolution in Russia the history of humanity witnessed for the first time, the victory of the working class over the capitalist structures of a country. The ever-lasting spirit of the Russian revolution influenced not only the Eastern Europe but also a major part of the international system. It changed the very political map of the world from capitalism to socialism.

While discussing about the crisis of the capitalism and Marxist-Leninist theory ■ Namboodiripad said, "In these crises a great part not only of the existing products but also of the previously created production forces are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity -- the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of

subsistence; industry and commerce seems to be destroyed; and why ? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce . "Marx discussed about this crises in his classical work Capital. Not only both Marx and Engels discussed about the recurring cyclical crises steadily leading to its inevitable destruction but also pointed out that the active force which arises within womb of capitalism will surely destroy the capitalism itself. Marx said, "Not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians."

According to Namboodiripad, the formation of the socialist camp comprising several nations would ultimately lead to the virtual end of the colonial systems. While analysing the central features of the world political scene he cautioned us to be aware of the weaknesses and difficulties of the countries of the socialist world. He said that the socialist world is not an island in the ocean of humanity. It coexists with the capitalist world. "While it is possible for the Socialism to exert its influence on the capitalist world , it in its turn faces the dangers of the penetration of the influence of the capitalist world." The present day crises in the capitalist world is bound to have its impact on the Socialist world. Therefore, one has to be careful to see that economic planning proceeds on the well-tested principles of balanced and proportionate development.

He emphasised that the long-term perspectives of the Socialist development programmes should be based on the step by step nationalisation, collectivisation and social control of all the means and instruments of production, including land. He cautioned both State and the Party leadership not to neglect the supreme task of fighting the evil influences of alien class ideology which appears in various manifestations, including the iron grip of religion on the minds of the people. This analysis of Namboodiripad shows now to what extent his philosophy has become relevant in the contemporary society .

### **14.7.2 On Caste Conflicts**

Namboodiripad said that the destruction of the 'age-old' village system and the development of the new capitalism by the British administration resulted in two apparently contradictory features in the Indian society and politics : the emergence of working class as a class and the disruption of the unity of the working class and the toiling people as evidenced in the increasing conflicts between 'backward' and 'forward castes'. These tensions were built into the national movement in which the leaders often highlighted the revival of the 'age-old' Indian civilisation and culture thereby emphasising division of society into a hierarchical system of castes. He talked about the two contradictory features of the Indian politics : the growing unity of the working class against the Bhootlingam Report and the Industrial Relations Bill in 1973, and the growing conflicts between the 'backward' and 'forward' communities. He advised us to have a proper understanding of the nature and depth of these two crises, and to resist oppression that acts as one of the contributing factors giving rise to tensions and conflicts among 'higher' and 'lower' castes. He referred to the non-Brahmin movements in different parts of the country. It is important to remember that the struggle waged by the millions of people belonging to the hitherto oppressed castes and communities has become now an integral part of the struggles for secular democracy. It would therefore, be rational to conclude that the demand for reservations made by the 'backward' communities would be a just demand.

### 14.7.3 National Unity

One of the important aims of the freedom struggle was to bring about unity among various castes, religious communities and linguistic groups under the banner of revolt against the British administration. The struggle also highlighted the removal of evil systems such as untouchability and inferior status to women. The Bhabnagar Session (1961) of the Congress emphasised on this aspect. It said, "Under the cover of the political and social activities the old evils of communalism, casteism, provincialism and linguism have again appeared in some measures. Communalism which has in the past done so much injury to the nation is again coming into evidence and taking advantage of the democratic apparatus to undermine this unity to encourage reactionary tendencies. Provincialism and linguism have also adversely affected the causes for which the Congress has been fighting for over decades. It is therefore of the utmost importance that every effort must be made to remove these evils or the adoption of this resolution was followed by the appointment of the National Integration Committee.

Namboodiripad said that "the revivalism of the majority gave a modern 'secular' garb of 'nationalism' to the essentially Hindu communalist approach. The revivalism of the minority was on the other hand taking an openly communal stand." He considered revivalism as a serious threat to the national unity.

The betrayal of the national bourgeoisie in the matter of national language and virtual abandonment of the democratic approach to the problems of languages and linguistic states has created growing political discontent among the people. Besides, the economic development programmes have not been able to remove disparities among the people. Increasing powers to the peoples representatives, complete restoration of the fundamental rights of the people, removal of anti-people measures, regional autonomy for the tribal areas, equal rights for all citizens irrespective of religion, caste and sex, free compulsory education upto secondary levels, people's cultural programmes, and equitable resources distribution among all regions are some of the measures highlighted by him.

Namboodiripad was very much critical of the abominable treatment given to women in the society. He said that the society is to be modernised, if I-Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other women – even among the Hindus – are to be enabled to enjoy privileges of a modern monogamous family having equal rights with men, the struggle of women as women should be further carried forward. "That women as an integral part of the toiling classes – working classes, the peasantry – should therefore participate with men in all these movements is also undeniable." Emphasising the role of the organisations of women, he said that these organisations 'too should realise that their own struggle for equality can be led to successful conclusion only if the common organisations of the working people are strengthened and if they embrace in their ranks both men and women."

### 14.7.4 Strategy of Indian Revolution

The draft political resolution prepared by the National Council of the 'Right' Communist party for their Congress held at Cochin in October 1971 emphasised on "a Left and democratic government at the centre with the Congress at its head. They officially called it an alliance of 'Left democratic forces inside and outside the Congress'. Namboodiripad was very much

critical of this approach . The CPI(M) gave a call for ‘ a struggle against the whole camp of reaction represented by all parties of the ruling classes , including and dominated by the ruling Congress Party. He advocated for a well-coordinated political struggle against three main enemies of the people – imperialism or foreign monopoly , feudalism or all the antiquated socio-cultural, economic and political institutions within the country, and the rapidly growing monopoly capital with the foreign collaboration.'

He was emphatic about proletarian internationalism of the working classes towards the world socialist movement. He said that ‘Indian revolution is an integral part of the process of transition from capitalism to socialism that takes place on a world scale. But this does not mean that India is ripe for this transition. India has to go through another revolution as the main pre-condition for the transition from capitalism to socialism.'"

### **14.7.5 Indian History**

Namboodiripad was of the opinion that although historians claim to be ‘impartial’, ‘objective’ and interested only in ‘discovering the truth’, their work invariably reflects the philosophy of the class they belong to. Some of the historians stand for particular religious communities , regional , linguistic or cultural groups or communities. Their writings often reflect their approaches to the problems of the history and culture of India. Often the conflicting views of different historians, representing particular schools of history create social tensions and instabilities. He said , "Historians other than those guided by the theory of historical materialism are handicapped by the fact that they do not see the history of human society as one of man’s struggle against nature in the course of which he enters into mutual relations with other members of the society. Nor do they perceive that these mutual reactions become what are known as relations of conflicts between the exploiting and exploited classes." It is indeed necessary to look upon the history of all human societies as the history of class struggle. While referring to the study of the history of India, one should begin with the quest for understanding the nature of the pre British society, its weakness, and developments of these weaknesses, existing socio-economic structures, and political regimes.

The political philosophy of EMS Namboodiripad is indeed a valuable contribution to the growth of social sciences of the contemporary society.

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## **14.8 SUMMARY**

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Communist thought in India has its roots in the Marxist – Leninist ideology. The communist movement in India, though following the Marxist tenets, steered ahead in the specific Indian conditions. The early communists, before the birth of the Communist Party of India (CPI) were anti-imperialist. That is why, they had to undergo imprisonment (Kanpur, Meerut Cases). The CPI, in its initial years, worked with some effectiveness in organising the workers and the peasants. It witnessed a split in the course of its evolution (the CPI and the CPI-M). It stood for the establishment of socialist society and sought an imperialist-free and exploitation-free socialist internationalism. The Indian Marxists had never been the orthodox followers of Marxism. M N Roy moved, theoretically, from Marxism to radical humanism; while EMS Namboodiripad sought, in practical terms, a modernised developed society in India, especially in Kerala.

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## 14.9 EXERCISES

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1. Mention, in brief, the growth of communist movement in India.
2. Distinguish between Socialism and Communism
3. How far was MN Roy influenced by Marxism? On what grounds did he differ from Marxism?
4. What were Roy's Ideas on Radical Humanism?
5. Mention the contribution of EMS Namboodiripad to the communist thought in India.
6. Trace the Indian Communist thought before and after independence.

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# UNIT 15 SOCIALIST THOUGHT: RAMMANOHAR LOHIA AND JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

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## Structure

- 15.1 . Introduction
- 15.2 History of Socialist Movement in India
- 15.3 Congress Socialist Party: Programmes and Policies
- 15.4 Socialist Thought of Dr. Ranxmanohar Lohia**
- 15.5 Socialist Thought of Jayaprakash Narayan
- 15.6 Summary
- 15.7 Exercises

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## 15.1 INTRODUCTION

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The growth of socialist thought as a philosophy of social and economic reconstruction is mostly the product of the Western impact on India. One of the leading saint-philosopher of India, Aurobindo Ghosh's criticism of the middle class mentality of the leaders of the Indian National Congress and his plea for the social development of the "proletariats" in his articles to the magazine "Indu Prakash in 1893, B. G. Tilak's reference to the Russian Nihilists in the Kesari in 1908, C.R.Das's reference to the glorious role of the Russian Revolution in the contetnparary international system, and particularly his emphasis on the role of the trade union movements in the structural development of the social and political system of India, in his Presidential address at the Gaya Session of the Indian National Congress in 1917, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nelxru's eloquence about the New Economic Policy of 1926 and other developments in the Soviet Union in his articles and books such as *Soviet Russia, Autobiography, and Glimpses of World History*, are some of the examples of the impact of the Soviet ideas and thoughts on the minds of the leading Indian thinkers and political leaders.

One of the leading figures of the freedom struggle in India, Lala Lajpat Rai was considered by some critics as the first writer on Socialism and Bolshevism in India. The Marxist leader, M.N.Roy was very critical of Lala Lajpat Rai's writings, particularly his book, *The Future of India*. He considered him as "a bourgeois politician with sympathy for socialism". Roy, in his book, "*India in Transition and Indian Problem*" was also critical of the bourgeois attitude of the leaders of the Indian National Congress. Roy was not a blind follower of Russian communism. He considered Russian communism as a form of state capitalism. In his book, *Russian Revolution*, he regarded the Russian Revolution as "a fluke of history".

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## 15.2 HISTORY OF SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA

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The socialist movement became popular in India only after the First World War and the Russian Revolution. The unprecedented economic crisis of the twenties coupled with the capitalist and imperialist policies of the British Government created spiralling inflation and increasing unemployment among the masses. According to John Patrick Haithcox, imperialism

was considered as a form of capitalist class government intended to perpetuate the slavery of the workers. The success of the Russian Revolution under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky and the economic growth of that country inspired intellectuals and political leaders of the developing countries of the Third World including India.

A number of radical groups and youth leagues opposing the policies of the British government were born in India. A left wing was created within the Congress Party under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. In November 1928 an organisation called the Independence for India League was created under the leadership of S. Srinivas Iyengar. Both Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were its joint secretaries. This left oriented pressure group within the Congress spearheaded the movement for complete political, social, and economic independence. In the Lahore Session of the Congress, in 1929, Jawaharlal Nehru, with the help of this left wing group, got a resolution for complete independence passed. After this resolution for independence was passed, the Independence for India League got slowly disintegrated.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century a number of political parties based on religion, caste, and community came into existence in India. According to a leading social scientist, Gopal Krishna, "Articulate political parochialism – characteristic of a society where primary loyalties continue to centre around caste and community, social and geographic mobility was minimal and attitudes were not enlightened by an awareness of the larger national community – resulted in the early formation of communal and caste parties, seeking in their own way to participate in the process of political modernisation."

The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) , the precursor of the Jan Sangh, was born in 1925. The Justice Party, an anti-Brahmin movement in the Madras Presidency, came into existence in 1917. Both the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha were formed in 1906.

As a result of the impact of the Russian Revolution, most of the left parties were formed in the Third World countries. The Communist Party of India (CPI) was born in 1925. This left party was linked with the Communist International of Moscow. Besides, a lot of radical splinter groups also were born in different parts of India.

The Communist Party, with the help of the Communist International and the British Communist Party, made rapid progress in the field of trade union movements till the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928. With the criticism of the Congress Party as an instrument of 'bourgeoisie nationalism' and Gandhism, which Lenin regarded as 'revolutionary', as an "openly counter-revolutionary force", the Communist Party got alienated from the masses as well as from the freedom struggle. M.N.Roy also started his radical group in 1930 after he was expelled from Comintern in 1929,

The failure of the two civil disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932 and the compromising attitude of the Congress at the two Round Table Conferences made a number of young leaders disillusioned. During this time, Gandhi also suspended his Satyagraha movement and started concentrating on constructive programmes. Many Congressmen considered this development as failure of Gandhi's non-violent struggle. In this atmosphere of disillusionment an attempt was made to form the Congress Socialist Party, a Marxism oriented organisation within the Congress Party in 1934.



The socialist groups were also formed in Punjab, Bengal, Benares and Kerala. In Poona the task of forming the socialist party within the Congress was entrusted to Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Yusuf Meherally and Purshottam Trikamdas. Other leaders who were instrumental in the formation of the Congress Socialist Party were: Jayaprakasli Narayan, Minoo Masani, Asoka Melita, Achyut Patwardhan, N.G.Goray, M.L.Dantwala, Acharya Narendra Deva, Dr.Rammanohar Lohia and S.M. Joshi. While in prison, these leaders prepared the blue print for the Congress Socialist Party. Thus the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was born out of the disillusionment with the civil resistance movement, growth of constitutionalism, and anti-national role of the Communist Party of India and its alienation from the national mainstream. Some socialist critics are of the opinion that if the Communist Party of India would not have shown its anti-Gandhi and anti-freedom struggle mentality, and the Congress Party would not have been dominated by the conservative elements, perhaps the Congress Socialist Party would never have been born at all.

During the thirties, Jawaharlal was considered as a great champion of the socialist philosophy. Every young leader of the Congress Party looked upon him as the symbol of socialism. In a letter to Minoo Masani on December 1934, Nehru welcomed the "formation of the socialist groups within the Congress to influence the ideology of the Congress and the country."

By 1934, many socialist groups were formed in different parts of the country. It was then realised that these groups were to be brought under one socialist platform. Jayaprakasli Narayan organised a conference of socialist members in Patna in May 1934. He also revived the Bihar Socialist Party. The All India Congress Socialist Party was formed at this conference. Gandhi's decision to withdraw the civil disobedience movement and the revival of the rightist Swaraj Party precipitated the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. Gandhi's favourable attitude towards the Swarajists like B.C.Roy, K.M.Munshi, Bhulabhai Desai and others and the Congress decision to withdraw the civil disobedience movement and launch parliamentary programmes in the forthcoming Patna meeting on 18 May 1934, made socialist forces in the Congress to create the Congress Socialist Party on 17 May 1934. Acharya Narendra Deva was made the chairman and Jayaprakasli Narayan as the organising secretary of the committee to draft the constitution and the programmes of the Congress Socialist Party.

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### **15.3 CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY: PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES**

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The birth of the Congress Socialist Party in May 1934 was a landmark in the history of the socialist movement of India. While assessing the programmes and policies of the Congress Socialist Party, it will be desirable to remember the contribution of the Meerut Conspiracy case in spreading the ideology of the early 1930s. Besides, the creation of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936, and the role of the Youth League and Independence for India League can never be ignored in the growth of the socialist thought in India. The Congress Socialist Party provided an all India platform to all the socialist groups in India. The publication of the Party and the writings of the socialist leaders inspired the youth of India in different parts of the country to take up constructive programmes for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Ashok Mehta's *Democratic Socialism*, and *Studies in Asian Socialism*, Acharya Narendra Deva's *Socialism and National Revolution*, Jayaprakash Narayan's *Towards Struggle* (1946), and

Dr. Rammanohar Lohia's *The Mystery of Sir Stafford Cripps* (1942) played a significant role in spreading the messages of socialism in India.

It was declared in the Socialist conference of 1934 that the basic objective of the Party was to work for the "complete independence in the sense of separation from the British Empire and the establishment of socialist society." The Party membership was not open to the members of the communal organisations. Its basic aim was to organise the workers and peasants for a powerful mass movement for independence. Programmes included a planned economy, socialisation of key industries and banking, elimination of the exploitation by Princes and landlords and initiation of reforms in the areas of basic needs.

The ideology of the Congress Socialist Party was a combination of the principles of Marxism, the ideas of democratic socialism of the British Labour Party, and socialism mixed with the Gandhian principles of Satyagraha and non-violence. The Party was under the influence of deep Marxist ideas in its formative phase. The leading members of the Congress Socialist Party belonged to different streams of thought. According to Masani, "I was a staunch democrat of the Labour Party kind and had little sympathy with communist methodology or technique though I was a rather starry-eyed admirer of the October Revolution in Russia.... JP on the other hand was a staunch believer in the dictatorship of the proletariat, whatever that may mean. Marxism was the bed rock of his socialist faith."

Some of the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party like Acharya Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash Narayan were the strong supporters of the Marxist trend in the CSP. By 1940s, JP came under the spell of Gandhi and the Gandhian socialism. By 1954, he was disillusioned with the functioning of party politics. He left CSP and joined the Sarvodaya movement. Other leaders like M.L. Dantwala, M.R. Masani, Ashok Mehta, and Pursottam Trikam Das were the followers of the principles of the British Fabian socialism. Masani left the CSP in 1939 and became a strong supporter of free enterprise. He was instrumental in the formation of the Swatantra Party in 1959. Achyut Patwardhan and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia were the followers of Gandhian methodology in the Party. Patwardhan became a follower of J. Krishnamurti in 1950 and left all party politics. Dr. Lohia continued to be a prominent Gandhian socialist leader throughout.

The ideological differences among the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party had a deep impact on the policies, programmes and organisational development of the Party. In the formative phase of the Party, all the leaders remained together because of their strong sense of nationalism, camaraderie, and brotherhood, and what is often referred to as their "intensive personal friendship". According to Madhu Limaye, they were all from a similar urban, middle class, highly educated background. They were also young and idealistic, possessed a strict code of ethics and had great "respect for values of truth and decency. Of all the leaders, JP was the most prominent cohesive factor. He was considered as the most important leader of the socialist movement. Because of his organisational capacity and strong Marxist approach, the Party, in the formative phase, followed the Marxist approach and principles."

The 1936 Meerut Thesis put emphasis on the Party to follow and develop into a national movement, an anti-imperialist movement based on the principles of Marxism. According to this thesis, it was "necessary to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary

socialism." This task can be accomplished only if there is within the Congress an organised body of Marxian socialists. ...Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny. Party members must therefore fully understand the technique of revolution, the theory of practice of the class struggle, the nature of the state and process leading to the socialist society." This thesis was adopted at the Faizpur Conference of the Congress Socialist Party in 1936.

The socialists played an important role in the 1942 Quit India Movement, and in organised trade union movements of the country. Their increasing popularity was neither lilted by the leading members of the Congress nor by the communists and the Royalists. The communists were not part of the nationalist struggle against the British imperialism. They also did not like the popularity of the trade union movements under the leadership of the socialists. They criticised them as fascists and symbol of 'left reformism'.

The Congress leaders were not very sympathetic to the role of the socialists inside the Congress organisation. The socialists of the Congress, particularly the CSP members, were opposed to the constitutional arrangements of the 1935 Act and did not like the Congress decision to participate in the elections in the states although ultimately persons like Acharya Narendra Deva participated in the elections. The Congress decision to form ministries in the states after the elections in 1937 was opposed by the socialists. Leading members like Jayaprakash Narayan of the CSP were convinced that this very constitutional arrangement would create obstacles in the growth of the 'revolutionary mentality in the Congress'. In his report at the Nasik Conference of the Congress Socialist Party in 1948, Jayaprakash Narayan said, "Looking back, however, and in spite of the years, I still believe it was wrong to have accepted offices then. While it yielded no advantage, it gave birth to a mentality of power politics within the Congress that threatens now to become its undoing."

The soft attitude of the Congress organisation towards the landlords, its policies regarding the Princely states, and its opposition to the Kisan movements in the states also embittered the relationship between the socialists and the leading members of the Congress. The Congress organisation was not very sympathetic towards the Kisan movements under the leaders of the CSP. They even went to the extent of passing an official resolution at the Haripura Session in 1938 asking its members not to associate with the Kisan organisations. The victory of Subhas Chandra Bose against Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhi's candidate, was not very much liked by the Congress leaders. In March 1939, a Congress resolution moved by G.B. Pant, asked the newly elected Congress President Subhas Chandra Bose, to nominate the members of his Working Committee as per the advice of Gandhi. At this critical moment of the CSP, its members were divided on the issue of support towards Bose. Jayaprakash Narayan and the communists in the organisation wanted to support Bose. Dr.Lohia, Masani, Ashok Mehta and Yusuf Meherally were not in favour of Bose as they thought that the decision to support Bose would result in the polarisation of the national movement into two camps and would ultimately weaken the nationalist struggle against the British government. The decision by the socialist members to abstain from voting on the resolution, shocked Bose to such an extent that he decided to resign from the Presidentship and form his own party, the Forward Bloc. All these developments weakened the CSP as an emerging organisation of the socialist forces in the country. In the Nasik Convention of the CSP, in March 1948, the socialists ultimately took the decision to leave the Congress and to form the Socialist Party of India.

In 1952, immediately after the first national election, the Socialist Party and the Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) of J.B.Kripalani took a decision to merge into a single organisation.

The socialist organisations in India then had two basic objectives: (a) They wanted to develop into an all-India organisation for social and economic reconstruction and (b) Development of the weaker sections of the social structure and also as an ideological framework for political emancipation of India.

The Bolshevik theory of democratic centralism deeply influenced the ideological deliberations of the Congress Socialist Party till the independence. With the attainment of independence in 1947 and death of Gandhi in the next year, the Congress Socialist Party underwent a significant transformation. It moved away from the communist principle of democratic centralism and Marxist methodology towards the area of democratic socialism. Also, in order to achieve a mass base, the CSP diluted some of its earlier ideological frameworks and methodology. Soon the electoral processes of adjustments, alliances, and even mergers were undertaken with political organisations that neither believed in democratic processes nor in the principles of nationalism, socialism and democracy. From a revolutionary path, it moved towards parliamentary methods of coalitional approach.

The Congress Socialist Party adopted the principle of democratic socialism in the Patna Convention of the party in 1949 more seriously. While emphasising its ideological purity the party was more careful about its constructive activities among the peasants, poor and the working class. In its famous Allahabad Thesis of 1953 the party proposed to go for all electoral alliance adjustment with the opposition parties. But the Party was not prepared to have any united front or coalition with any political party. In the Gaya session of the Party statements the separate identity of the Congress Socialist Party was also emphasised. The Party was reluctant to have any electoral adjustment or coalition with the Congress, Communist or Hindu Fundamentalist Party or Organisations. But this attitude was toned down and diluted during the General Elections of 1957 and thereafter.

In 1952, the Congress Socialist Party strongly advocated for the greater synthesis of the Gandhian ideals with socialist thought. Dr. Rammanohar Lohia as the President of the Party put emphasis on a decentralised economy based on handicrafts, cottage industries and industries based on small machines and maximum use of labour with small capital investment. During the Panchamarhi Socialist Convention in May 1952, this line of thought of Dr. Lohia did not impress several Socialist leaders of the Party. In June 1953, Ashok Mehta's thesis of the "Political compulsion of a backward economy" pleaded for a greater cooperation between the Socialist and the Congress Party. As a counterpoise to Ashok Mehta's thesis, Dr. Lohia offered the "Theory of Equidistance". This theory advocated equidistance from the Congress and the Communists by the Socialist parties. As a result of these two streams of thought the Congress Socialist Party was divided into two camps. Some of the members even thought of quitting the party to join the Congress, .

One of the prominent leaders of the Congress Socialist Party, Acharya Narendra Deva was not in favour of the Socialists to join the Congress. He was a staunch believer in the principle of dialectical materialism of Marx. He said, "We can perform the task before us only if we try to comprehend the principle and purposes of Socialism and to understand the dialectical method propounded by Marx for the correct understanding of the situation and make that

understanding the basis of true action we must make our stand on scientific socialism and steer clear of utopian socialism or social reformism. Nothing short of a revolutionary transformation of the existing social order can meet the needs of the situation. He believed in the moral governance of the world and primacy of moral values. He considered socialism as a cultural movement. He always emphasised the humanist foundation of socialism; he was not in favour of the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence in its entirety. He was in favour of broadening the basis of mass movement by organising the masses on an economic and class-conscious basis. He was in favour of an alliance between the lower middle class and the masses. He said that "They could become class conscious only when an appeal was made to them in economic terms" to understand India. He pleaded for an alliance between the Socialist movement and the National movement for a colonial country. He said that political freedom was an "inevitable stage on the way to socialism". He was a strong supporter of George Sorel's Syndicalist Theory of "General Strike". He said, "In India, unlike Russia, the proletarian weapon of strike has not yet been the signal for mass action; but the working class can extend its political influence only when by using its weapon of general strike in the service of the national struggle, it can impress the petty bourgeoisie with the revolutionary possibilities of a strike".

During the socialist movements in the pre independence phase, and subsequently during the 1940's, 50's and 60's, greater emphasis was put on the acceleration of agricultural production, cooperative, land ceiling, reduction of unemployment, and the raising of the living standards of the suppressed and backward communities. The socialist party always advocated for the separation of the judiciary from the administration and its decentralisation on the lines of the Balwant Rai Mehta committee report. The basic philosophy of the Socialist thought in India was based on a synthesis of secularism, nationalism and democratic decentralisation process.

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## **15.4 SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF DR. RAMMANOHAR LOHIA**

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Rammonohar Lohia articulated his approach in what he called Seven Revolutions such as equality between man and woman, 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 backward, majors against foreign enslavement in different forms, economic equality, planned production, and removal of capitalism, against unjust encroachments on private life, non proliferation of weapons and reliance on Satyagraha were the basic elements of his thought. In his book on Marx, Gandhi and Socialism, Lohia made an analysis of principles of democratic socialism as an appropriate philosophy for the successful operation of constructive programmes. He said, "Conservatism and communism have a strange identity of interest against socialism. Conservatism holds socialism as its democratic rival and does not fear communism except as a threat of successful insurrection. Communism prefers the continuance of a conservative government and is mortally afraid of a socialist party coming to office, for, its chances of an insurrection are then deemed".

Lohia made a significant contribution in the field of socialist thought in India, He always laid greater emphasis on the combination of the Gandhian ideals with the socialist thought. He was a proponent of the cyclical theory of history. He believed that through the principles of democratic socialism the economy of a developing country could be improved. Although Dr. Lohia was a supporter of dialectical materialism he put greater emphasis on consciousness. He was of the opinion that through an internal oscillation between class and caste, historical

dynamism of a country could be insured. According to Dr. Lohia, the classes represent the social mobilisation process and the castes are symbols of conservative forces. All human history, he said, has always been "an internal movement between caste and classes – caste loosen into classes and classes crystallise into castes". He was an exponent of decentralised socialism. According to him small machines, cooperative labour and village government, operate as democratic forces against capitalist forces. He considered orthodox and organised socialism "a dead doctrine and a dying organisation".

Lohia was very popular for his Four Pillar State concept. He considered village, mandal (district), province and central government as the four pillars of the state. He was in favour of villages having police and welfare functions.

He propounded his theory of New Socialism at Hyderabad in 1959. This theory had six basic elements. They were equalitarian 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. In his Pancharahi conference address in 1952 he said, "The tensions and emptiness of modern life seem difficult to overcome, whether under capitalism or communism as the hunger for rising standards is their mother and common to both. Capitalists expected their ideal kingdom to arise out of each man's self interest operating under a perfect competition; communists still expect their ideal kingdom to arrive out of social ownership over means of production. Their common fallacy has now shown up that the general aims of society do not inevitably flow out of certain economic aims. An integrated relationship between the two sets of aims has to be set up by the intelligence of man."

Lohia advocated socialism in the form of a new civilisation which in the words of Marx could be referred to as "socialist humanism". He gave a new direction and dimension to the socialist movement of India. He said that India's ideology is to be understood in the context of its culture, traditions, and history. For the success of democratic socialist movement in India, it is necessary to put primary emphasis on the removal of caste system through systemic reform process. Referring to the caste system he said, "All those who think that with the removal of poverty through a modern economy, these segregations will automatically disappear, make a big mistake." He often highlighted the irrelevance of capitalism for the economic reconstruction and development of the Third World countries.

Lohia was opposed to doctrinaire approach to social, political, economic and ideological issues. He wanted the state power to be controlled, guided, and framed by people's power and believed in the ideology of democratic socialism and non-violent methodology as instruments of governance.

Lohia was deeply influenced by Leon Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution". He preached and practiced the concept of "permanent civil disobedience" as a peaceful rebellion against injustice. To him the essence of social revolution could be achieved through a combination of jail, spade and vote. His theory of "immediacy" was very popular among the youth. He wanted that organisation and action must continue as parallel currents and strongly pleaded for "constructive militancy" and "militant construction".

Lohia was convinced that no individual's thought could be used as the sole frame of reference

for the ideology of any movement. Although he was in favour of Marx's theory of dialectical materialism, he was aware of its limitations. He emphasised both the economic factors and human will as important elements of development of history. He was convinced that "logic of events" and "logic of will" would govern the path of history.

He was not convinced by the Marxist thesis that the revolutions were to occur in the industrially developed societies. He said that communism borrowed from capitalism its conventional production techniques; it only sought to change relationship among the forces of production. Such a process was unsuitable for the conditions prevailing in India. He pleaded for small unit technology and decentralised economy. For him the theory of determinism was not a solution for the tradition bound Indian society where class distinctions and caste stratifications rule the day. The Marxist theory of class struggle is not an answer for the complex social structures of India.

Lohia was convinced that the concept of "welfare-statism" was not an answer for the social and economic progress of countries in the Third World. The Marxist concept of class struggle had no place for the peasant because he was "an owner of property and an exacter of high prices for their food." Dr. Lohia always emphasised on the role of peasants in the economic, political and social developments of the country. According to him, "Undoubtedly, the farmer in India, as elsewhere, has a greater role to play, than whom none is greater, but others may have equal roles to play. The talk of subsidiary alliances between farmers and workers and artisans and city poor must be replaced by the concept of equal relationship in the revolution." He gave a call for the civil disobedience movements against all forms of injustice and for the creation of a new world order.

Lohia was of the view that the universal male domination and obnoxious caste system as the two basic weaknesses of India's social structure and pleaded for their eliminations at all levels. He said, "All politics in the country, Congress, Communist, or socialist, has one big area of national agreement, whether by design or through custom, and that is to keep down and disenfranchise the Sudra and the women who constitute over three-fourth of our entire population." He appealed to the youth to be at the forefront of the social reconstruction process to eliminate these social evils. He said, "I am convinced that the two segregations of caste and women are primarily responsible for this decline of the spirit. These segregations have enough power to kill all capacity for adventure and joy." Poverty and these social segregations are inter-linked and thrive 'on each other's' worms. He asserted, "all war on poverty is a shame, unless it is, at the same time, a conscious and sustained war on these two segregations."

Religion and politics, said Lohia, are deeply inter-linked and have the same origin. Although the jurisdictions of religion and politics are separate, a wrong combination of both corrupts both. He was of the view that both religion and politics could be judiciously administered to develop the infrastructures of the political systems. He said, "Religion is long term politics and politics is short term religion. Religion should work for doing well and praising goodness. Politics should work for fighting the evil and condemning it. When the religion instead of doing something good confines itself to praising the goodness only, it becomes lifeless. And when politics, instead of fighting evil, only condemns it, it becomes quarrelsome. But it is a fact that imprudent mixture of religion and politics corrupts both of them. No particular religion should associate itself with any particular politics. It creates communal fanaticism.

The main purpose of the modern ideology of keeping religion separate from politics is to ensure that communal fanaticism does not originate. There is also one more idea that power of awarding punishment in politics and religious orders should be placed separately, otherwise it could give impetus to conservatism and corruption. Despite keeping all the above precautions in view, it is all the more necessary that religion and politics should be complementary to each other, but they should not encroach upon each other's jurisdiction. “

As a socialist thinker and activist, Lohia has carved out for himself a unique place in the history of Indian socialist thought and movement. Although there has been a tendency among the contemporary researchers not to recognise him as an academic system-builder in the tradition of Kant, Hegel or Comte, his democratic socialist approach to look at ideology as an integrated phenomenon is now being widely accepted throughout the world.

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## **15.5 SOCIALIST THOUGHT OF JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN**

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Jayaprakash Narayan popularly known as 'JP' was a confirmed Marxist in 1929. By the middle of 1940s he was inclined towards the Gandhian ideology. Till 1952 JP had no faith in non-violence as an instrument of social transformation process. The transformations of the Russian society in the late 1920s had thereafter changed his outlook towards Marxism and the process of dialectical materialism. Soviet Union was no more an ideal model for him for a socialist society. The bureaucratised dictatorship with the Red Army, secret police and guns produced an inherent disliking for the Soviet Pattern of development. He was convinced that it did not produce "decent, fraternal and civilised human beings". He said in 1947, "The method of violent revolution and dictatorship might conceivably lead to a socialist democracy; but in only country where it has been tried (i.e. the Soviet Union), it had led to something different, i.e. to a bureaucratic state in which democracy does not exist. I should like to take a lesson from history".

JP was convinced that there was inter-relationship between nature of the revolution and its future impact. He was convinced that any pattern of violent revolution would not lead to the empowerment of people at the grassroots level. He said, "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 passage from the hands of the people to them. There is always struggle for power at the top and 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".

JP was very much critical of dialectical materialism on human development. He was convinced that this methodology would affect the spiritual development of man. His concept of Total



Revolution is a holistic one. He used this term *Total Revolution* for the first time in a British magazine called *The Time* in 1969. Underlying the emphasis on the Gandhian concept of non-violence and Satyagraha he said, "Gandhiji's non violence was not just a plea for law and order, or a cover for the status quo, but a revolutionary philosophy. It is indeed, a philosophy of total revolution, because it embraces personal and social ethics and values of life as much as economic, political and social institutions and processes."

The concept of Total Revolution as enunciated by JP is a confluence of his ideas on seven revolutions i.e. social, economic, political, cultural, ideological and intellectual, educational and spiritual. JP was not very rigid regarding the number of these revolutions. He said the seven revolutions could be grouped as per demands of the social structures in a political system. He said, "For instance the cultural may include educational and ideological revolutions. And if culture is used in an anthropological sense, it can embrace all other revolutions." He said, "economic revolution maybe split up into industrial, agricultural, technological revolutions etc. similarly intellectual revolutions maybe split up into two – scientific and philosophical. Even spiritual revolution can be viewed as made of moral and spiritual or it can be looked upon as part of the culture. And so on." The concept of total revolution became popular in 1974 in the wake of mass movements in Gujarat and Bihar. He was deeply disturbed by the political process of degeneration in the Indian politics of the time. During his Convocation Address at the Benaras Hindu University in 1970 he said, "Politics has, however, become the greatest question mark of this decade. Some of the trends are obvious, political disintegration is likely to spread, selfish splitting of parties rather than their ideological polarisation will continue; the devaluation of ideologies may continue; frequent change of party loyalties for persona; or parochial benefits, buying and selling of legislatures, inner party indiscipline, opportunistic alliance among parties and instability of governments, all these are expected to continue."

JP was deeply moved by the mutilation of democratic process, political corruption and fall of moral standards in our public life. He said that if this pattern of administrative process continues then there would not be any socialism, welfarism, government, public order, justice, freedom, national unity and in short no nation. He said, "No ism can have any chance, democratic socialism symbolises an incessant struggle for the establishment of a just, casteless, social and economic order under a democratic system in which an individual is provided with proper environment." In his address in Patna on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1974 he said, "This is a revolution, a total revolution. This is not a movement merely for the dissolution of the assembly. We have to go far, very far".

In a letter to a friend in August 1976, JP defined the character of the Total Revolution. He wrote, "Total revolution is a permanent revolution. It will always go on and keep on changing both our personal and social lives. This revolution knows no respite, no halt, certainly not complete halt. Of course according to the needs of the situation its forms will change, its programmes will change, its process will change. At an opportune moment there may be an upsurge of new forces which will push forward the wheels of change. The soldiers of total revolution must keep certainly busy with their programmes to work and wait for such an opportune moment."

JP's Total Revolution involved the developments of peasants, workers, harijans, tribal people and indeed all weaker sections of the social structure. He was always interested in empowering and strengthening India's democratic system. He wanted the participation of people at all levels of decision-making process. He wanted that electoral representatives should be

accountable to his electors, not once in five years but if is unsuitable before the expiry of his five year term he should be replaced. The political representative must be continuously accountable to the public. He wanted electoral reforms to be introduced in the political system to check the role of black money in the electoral process of the country. He said that some kind of machinery should be established through which there could be a major of consultation with the setting up of candidates. This machinery should "keep a watch on their representatives and demand good and honest performance from them". Regarding the statutory provision for recalling the-elected representatives he said "I do recognise of course that it may not be vesy easy to devise suitable machinery for it and that the right to recall may be occasionally misused. But in a democracy we do not solve problems by denying to people their basic rights. If constitutional experts apply their minds to the problem, a solution may eventually be found."

JP was deeply disturbed by the growth of corruption in the Indian political system. He said "I know politics is not for saints. But politics at least under a democracy must know the limits which it may not cross." This was the focal point of JP's Peoples Charter which he submitted to the Parliament on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1975. He said "Corruption is eating into the vitals of our political life. It is disturbing development, undermining the administration and making a mockery of all laws and regulations. It is eroding peoples faith and exhausting their proverbial patience."

JP wanted a network of Peoples Committees to be established at the grass roots levels to take care of the problems of the people and the programmes for development. He wanted the economic and the political power to be combined in the hands of the people. Analysing his economic programme he said, "A Gandhian frame laying emphasis on agricultural development, equitable land ownership, the application of appropriate technology to agriculture such as improved labour, intensive tools and gadgets..., the development of domestic and rural industries and the widest possible spread of small industries".

JPs programme of Antyodaya meaning, the upliftment of the last man was an essential aspect of his socialist thought. On 21<sup>st</sup> march 1977, in a statement he said, "Bapu gave us a good yardstick. Whenever you are in doubt in taking a particular decision remember the face of the poorest man and think how it will affect him. May this yardstick guide all their actions." Right to work was an integral part of his concept of Total Revolution, he said "Once the state accepts this obligation, means will have to be found for providing employment to all. It is not so difficult to do so." JP was also particular about social reforms such as elimination of dowry system, development of the conditions of the harijans and abolition of the caste system in India's political system.

Analysing his concept of an ideal state, he said in 1977 that "the idea of my dream is a community in which every individual, every resource is dedicated to serving the weak, a community dedicated to Antyodaya, to the well being of the least and the weakest. It is a community in which individuals are valued for their humanity, a community in which the right of every iadividual to act according to his conscience is recognised and respected by all. In short, my vision is of a free, progressive and Gandhian India."

Mino Masani said, "All through the vicissitudes and jig-jags of JPs life, there has throughout been a non-violent means for total revolution." JP, throughout his career, highlighted the role of students and youth in the field of peoples movement. He said "Revolutions an' not brought about by those who are engaged in the race for power and office whether in the government or in non official organisations. Not also by those who are totally preoccupied with the

burden of providing bread to their families and are wary of adopting any risky step. The youth of a country alone are free from these constraints. They have idealism, they have enthusiasm, and they have a capacity to make sacrifice from which older men shrink." In his letter to youth in August, 1976 he said, "for the long and endless battle for Total Revolution there is a need of new leadership, the forces of history are with you. So go ahead with full confidence. Victory is certainly yours." Throughout his life JP has always tried to put men in the centre of picture. JP said, "In the society that I have in view for the future, man should occupy the central place, the organisation should be for man and not the other way round. By that I mean that the social organisation should be such as allows freedom to every individual to develop and grow according to his own inner nature, a society which believes in and practices the dignity of man, just as a human being."

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## 15.6 SUMMARY

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It is often said that the Indian socialist literature did not attain the depth and theoretical maturity like that of Plekhanov, or Bukharin or Rosa Luxemburg. But one must not forget that the significance of Indian Socialist thought lies in its emphasis on the needs of original socialist thinking in the context of agrarian, caste bound underdeveloped economy and polity of India. The German Marxists considered the peasants as reactionary elements. The socialist thought in India highlighted the role of peasants in the structural development of the economy. The Indian Socialists were interested to eliminate the prevailing class and caste struggles of Indian society. They indeed brought about some original thinking on the basic problems of Indian society – the role of peasants, caste struggle and planning in an under developed economy. They were for the synthesis of political liberty and economic reconstruction with the emphasis on the Gandhian principles of Non Violence and Satyagraha. This indeed is their contribution to the Indian Socialist thought.

At a time when the growth of excessive authoritarianism of political process and marginalisation of majority has coupled with a nexus between native monopolies and multinational industrial corporations, and unethical interactions between local ruling elite and their external counterparts, have created a new correlation between economic power and political power, there is indeed a need to remember the programmes, policies, ideals, methodology and message of the Indian socialists, particularly. As founding members of the Congress Socialist Party, freedom fighters and socialist theoreticians and political activists, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan played an immortal role in the socialist thought and economic development of India.

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## 15.7 EXERCISES

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1. Explain the history of socialist movement in India.
2. Discuss the evolution and origin, programme and policies of the Congress Socialist Party.
3. Examine the Socialist Thought of Dr. Rammanohar Lohia,
4. Explain the Socialist Thought of Jayaprakash Narayan.
5. Critically evaluate the relevance of the Socialist Thought in the Contemporary Indian Society.