ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi
National Open University
School of Social Sciences

MHI-09
Indian National Movement

Block

8

NATIONAL MOVEMENT: LEGACIES

Expert Committee

Prof. Mridula Mukherjee
Professor of History
Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi

Prof. Aditya Mukherjee
Professor of History
Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi

Prof. Aparna Basu
Former Professor of History
University of Delhi

Prof. K.L. Tuteja
Former Professor of History
Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Prof. Sucheta Mahajan
Professor of History
Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi

Prof. G.P. Sharma
Department of History and Culture
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

Dr. Visalakshi Menon
Jesus and Mary College
University of Delhi

Prof. Salil Misra
Department of History
Ambedkar University, Delhi

Prof. Kapil Kumar
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Ravindra Kumar
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. A.R. Khan
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Swaraj Basu
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Mr. Ajay Mahurkar
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. S.B. Upadhyay
(**Course Coordinator**)
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

* We are thankful to Prof. Salil Misra for conceiving and initiating this Course.

Course Coordinator

Prof. S.B. Upadhyay

Programme Coordinator

Prof. Swaraj Basu

Block Preparation Team

Unit No(s)	Resource Person
Units 32-33&35	Prof. Salil Misra Department of History Ambedkar University, Delhi
Units 34	Prof. Jagpal Singh Faculty of Political Science IGNOU, New Delhi.

Print Production

Mr. Manjit Singh
Section Officer (Pub.)
SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

BLOCK 8   NATIONAL MOVEMENT: LEGACIES

Indian nationalist movement, as broadly recognized, was among the greatest movements in history. Covering a large area, involving a huge number of people, and negotiating with a wide variety of ideologies, this movement was successful not only in establishing an independent nation-state but also in leaving a rich legacy of thought and practice for the new nation. In this final block of the course, we will take an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian nationalist movement.

In **Unit 32**, you will read about the strategy evolved by the nationalist movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi to fight against the biggest and most successful imperial power in the history. The British colonial state in India was not a fully authoritarian state. It was a semi-authoritarian and semi-hegemonic state which relied both on force and consent. It followed a certain level of legal path and was influenced by the public opinion. To fight against this kind of state, the nationalist movement adopted the strategy of non-violent mass struggle accompanied by the acceptance of piecemeal gain. Although this Gandhian strategy faced some challenges, it nevertheless remained the principle mode of struggle against the colonial state.

While the strategy of its struggle against the colonial power achieved success, the nationalist movement partially failed to contain the spectre of communalism which led to the partition of the country. **Unit 33** discusses the emergence of distinct religious communities in the nineteenth century and the development of mass communalism during the first half of the twentieth century. While the nationalist movement was able to contain the Hindu Mahasabha, it failed to bring a large number of Muslims within its folds and thereby neutralise the Muslim League. The phenomenal growth of the Muslim League in the 1930s and 1940s on the plank of hard communalism could not be countered effectively by the Congress. This was because the Congress did not follow a consistent strategy to tackle communalism and its responses varied according to situation.

One of the greatest achievements of the Indian nationalist leadership is the Indian Constitution which embodies the basic humanitarian and democratic values imbibed and developed during the nationalist movement. Ideals of democracy, individual rights, equality, liberty and secularism are enshrined in Indian Constitution. In **Unit 34**, we will discuss the important phases through which the Constitution was conceived and its modalities were worked out. Although the process of the constitution-making began since 1858, it was the Nehru Report in 1928 and finally the Constituent Assembly which determined the shape of Indian Constitution.

In **Unit 35**, you will learn about the important legacies left behind by the nationalist movement for the people of independent India. Territorial and non-coercive nationalism, large-scale participation of the common people in democratic processes, India's own version of secularism, commitment to civil liberties and an independent foreign policy were the most significant contributions of the movement to the post-independent polity. However, certain fissiparous tendencies which the nationalist movement could not do away with also survive till the present day. Thus, we can say that the nationalist movement had an enormous impact on the making of post-independent polity and society.

UNIT 32 NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND ITS STRATEGIES*

Structure

32.1 INTRODUCTION

A prolonged political movement can be studied by focusing on six major components – political objectives, programme and ideology, strategy, leadership, social base and class character. All the six components are important. Even though each one is connected to the other, none is a substitute or can be reduced to the other. The importance of the strategy for a prolonged struggle, such as the Indian National Movement, was immense. It provided continuity to the different phases of the struggle. The British imperialism was a complex phenomenon and could not be fought in a simple one-to-one combat. It required an elaborate set of techniques. The techniques had to be flexible enough to change according to the change in time and context. Yet the techniques had to be enduring and sustained enough to survive a mere change in the leadership. It is interesting that the change in leadership of the Movement did not necessarily bring about a change in the strategy. This Unit addresses itself to some salient questions pertaining to the strategy of the national movement.

32.2 DID THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT HAVE A STRATEGY?

On this question there have been two extreme views expressed in the various history writings. Interestingly both the views have denied either the importance or the very existence of a strategy for the movement. There was a traditional view often found in the nationalist history writings which highlighted the role of ideas and idealism, courage and sacrifices as the crucial elements in the movement. The assumption was that the freedom won in 1947 was primarily the product of courage, conviction and selfless sacrifice displayed by the leaders and their followers. Such a view obviously ignored the role of strategy in the movement.

The view on the other extreme was exemplified by some of the writings from the Cambridge School of history writing. This School often saw the movement

---

not as a "whole" but divided into multiple activities and interests. This was a fragmentary view of the national movement which did not see the movement as connected in time and space. So according to this view, the earlier phase of the movement was not connected to the latter phase and the political energies generated were concentrated at the local, provincial and the all-India levels. These levels often flowed into different directions. Also political activities were inspired not so much by ideas but 'interests'. In other words, the Cambridge School tended to develop a picture of the movement which was an assemblage of multiple fragments and interests, and not as a connected structured whole. Even such a view will obviously not look at strategy as a significant component of the movement.

As against these two views, the real discussion on strategy developed in some of the Marxian writings on the Movement, particularly those of Bipan Chandra. He argued that the movement as a whole was connected in time and space. It accommodated within itself multiple activities, techniques and tactics. But the movement, particularly in the Gandhian phase, was marked by the presence of a centralised strategic framework. This strategic framework performed an axial role during the course of the movement. It is therefore very important to focus on strategy as a crucial component of the national movement.

32.4   THE NATURE OF COLONIAL STATE

There is a strong co-relation between the nature of the State and the range of strategic options that can be employed against that State. The manner in which power is acquired and exercised is crucial for the manner in which that power can be challenged. In other words, the question of strategy can be understood better if we place it in the context of the nature of the colonial State in India.

Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the leading Italian Marxist thinker, gave us the clue to the relationship between the nature of the State and the nature of the struggles against it. Gramsci was grappling with a very important issue in Marxian thinking. He was wondering why the Bolshevik-type revolution, which succeeded in Tsarist Russia, did not appear likely to succeed in the capitalist democratic societies of Western Europe. His search for an answer to this question led him to focus on the nature of the State, as the main clue to the answer. He then argued that the nature of State in Western European societies was basically different from the Tsarist Russia and therefore the revolutionary struggle in these societies would have to be of a different nature. He divided the main strategies of struggle against state power into a war of manoeuvre (WoM) and a war of position (WoP). He argued that if power was heavily concentrated within the State, then WoM would be successful against it. This was the case for instance in Tsarist Russia, in which it was possible to smash state power in one blow. But in situations in which power was more diffused among various institutions and the State was fortified by a complex system of multiple 'trenches', the WoM will not be effective and a different strategy will be required. The 20th century capitalist societies were societies of this kind. This, according the Gramsci, was the main reason why socialist revolutions had not been successful in such situations. For such situations, Gransci recommended the strategy of WoP.

All States in history had ruled with the help of a combination of 'force' and 'consent'. No State had ruled exclusively and solely on the basis of naked force.

However in the modern states, force became more diffused and the area of consent became enlarged. Modern capitalist states ruled by creating a 'rule of law' which became a major source of legitimacy. This legitimacy enabled modern capitalist states to create zones of consent. In other words modern capitalist states ruled through 'hegemony' which was a combination of force and consent. Against such a hegemonic state, in which a large part of the society stood behind the state, the strategy of violent overthrow (as happened in Tsarist Russia) would not be possible. Instead, in such situations it would be more useful to resort to a 'war of position' i.e., a bit by bit struggle carried out in phases for small victories which would then be accumulated so as to turn into a grand success. Gramsci also called it 'trench warfare'. A favourable situation for a war of position is when the "consciousness of material impotence on the part of the great mass confronts a minority of oppressors". This would be a long-term struggle which would initially start from a situation of imbalance, in which the enemy would be stronger. But the strategy for war of position will seek to change this situation in stages.

It is interesting that although Gramsci had specified the strategy of WoP as effective against the democratic capitalist states, he was able to see that this strategy was being employed in the Indian national Movement. Even though he was in jail and would have had very limited exposure to the world outside, still he noticed some of the distinctive features of the Gandhi-led-struggle in howsoever limited a manner. Gramsci wrote in his Prison Diary:

'Thus India's political struggle against the English knows three forms of war: war of movement, war of positions and underground warfare. Gandhi's passive resistance is a war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at others underground warfare. Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes of war of movement, the secret preparations of weapons and combat troops belongs to underground warfare'.

What is the relevance of Granscian thinking for our discussion of the Strategy of the national movement? He had in mind two models of state power – the authoritarian model of a state with power concentrated directly within the state and the model of democratic European societies with power diffused and dispersed among multiple institutions. Interestingly the colonial state in India was different from both these types.

Although Gransci gave us the important conceptual category of 'war of position' for the dominant strategy for the national movement, he did not really specify the exact conditions in which the WoP was to be carried out. He also did not take up the question of violence and non-violence. It was here that Gandhian practice took this debate forward. Gandhi broadly agreed with the Marxian position that the State was an instrument of organised violence. But he did see the 20th century State as much more entrenched which could not be overthrown by a violent armed struggle. He wrote: "British domination has been as much sustained by British arms as it has been through the legislatures, distribution of titles, the law courts, the educational institutions, the financial policy and the like." All these had created some areas of consent which necessitated a non-violent struggle.

Gandhi had started developing his understanding of the British colonial state during his encounters with it in South Africa. During his Satyagraha in South

Africa, Gandhi experienced that there was a powerful public opinion in England, capable of influencing government decisions. Gandhi developed an admiration for the British democracy. At the same time he also noticed powerful conservative elements in British thinking. He is reported to have said sometime before the First World War: "The British are said to love liberty for themselves and for others....but they have a faculty for self-delusion that no other nation has." He also added a quality he admired among English people: "I have found Englishmen amenable to reason and persuasion and as they always wish to appear, it is easier to shame them than others into doing the right thing." (Quoted in B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics*, p. 68).

The presence of seemingly contradictory strands in British thinking has been articulated very succinctly by D.A. Low. He has called it an ambiguity between the dominant strands of self-image among the British. One was a liberal-democratic strand and the other was a conservative-imperialist one. On the one hand the British saw themselves as the leaders of the world who had the responsibility for promoting democracy and self-government in the world. At the same time there was also a conservative-imperialist self-image that fed into some of the policy decisions. In this self-image, colonies, particularly India, were seen as an important and integral component of the British Empire. It was believed that, minus the colonies, Great Britain would be easily reduced to a little Britain. Both the strands of thought were present in British thinking and policy making towards India. Therefore sometimes concessions were made (as in 1917 declaring self-government as the goal of British policy in India and in the Government of India Act of 1935 granting provincial autonomy). But on other occasions very repressive measures were also adopted (as in the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre in 1919 and the suppression of nationalist agitations after 1932 and in 1942).

This duality in British thinking and in policy formulation was articulated very well by Viceroy Ripon, when he said: "There are two policies lying before the choice of the Government of India; the one is the policy of those who have established a free press, who have promoted education, who have admitted natives more and more largely to the public service in various forms, and who have favoured the extension of self-government; the other side is that of those who hate the freedom of the press, who dread the progress of education, and who watch with jealousy and alarm everything which tends, in however limited a degree, to give the natives of India a larger share in the management of their own affairs." (S.R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of Indian National Congress*, pp. 305-06).

It is clear that Gandhi was acutely aware of this aspect of the British rule and incorporated it in the strategy he formulated vis-a-vis British imperialism.

32.4 MAKING OF THE GANDHIAN STRATEGY

Gandhian strategy of the anti-imperialist struggle was not codified in one place in the form of a blue-print or a manifesto. It was not prepared before the struggle was launched. It evolved in a process taking cognizance of current experiences and incorporating them in a strategic framework. Gandhian strategy was based on his understanding of the British rule and also his experiences in South Africa. His strategy of non-violent non-cooperation was borne out of his basic disenchantment with the existing nationalist politics. He understood the

limitations of the politics of Indian Moderates, based as it was on constitutional methods. Such a politics had its own limits. It could easily be co-opted through the offers of concessions. At any rate such a politics was based on the premise of a good will on the part of the rulers. The futility of such politics was demonstrated during the struggle against the partition of Bengal in which during 1903-05 the Moderate leaders made a plea to the British not to partition Bengal. Some of them hoped, quite naively, that once the British were convinced that there was an overwhelming consensus against the partition plan, they would see reason and not go ahead with their proposed partition. However none of that happened and the Moderate leaders themselves began to see the futility of their political techniques. The other alternative was underground political violence. Such politics emanated from the Swadeshi movement when many young people in Bengal, disillusioned with the failure of the Swadeshi movement, began to explore the option of political violence. The politics of underground violence was tried out in Bengal and was suppressed by the British.

Gandhi saw the futility of both these techniques. He was therefore searching for an alternative to both the extremes, which would avoid the pitfalls of both. He found the answer in non-violent non-co-operation. His non-cooperation was posited against the Moderate techniques which were ineffective at best and also ran the risk of being co-opted. And his non-violence was posited against the methods of violent revolutionaries, which could not last long and would eventually be suppressed. However in treating non-violence as a part of his strategy of struggle, one should not underplay his total and uncompromising commitment to non-violence. Non-violence was an effective strategy for the movement, but for Gandhi its significance was much more than purely strategic. He was fully committed to it and convinced of its moral superiority.

While discussing the making of Gandhian strategy, one has to refer to the struggle Gandhi launched in South Africa during 1908-14 against the discrimination practised by the South African government against the Indian population there. It is interesting that Gandhi tried all the techniques in South Africa before practising them in India. Gandhi set up a Press "International Printing Press" in Pretoria in 1904. He started a journal *Indian Opinion* in Johannesburg before starting *Young India* and *Harijan* in India. He set up two Ashrams in South Africa – Phoenix and Tolstoy, before setting up Ashrams in Ahmedabad and in Wardha. During his Satyagraha in South Africa, Gandhi practised non-cooperation, boycott and also took a long march from Natal to Transvaal along the lines of his famous Dandi march in 1930 as part of his Salt Satyagraha. He also showed willingness for a pact or a negotiation with the government of South Africa. The only weapon he did not try in South Africa was the fast. Fasting as a political method was tried out by Gandhi for the first time in 1918 during his leadership of the strike by the Ahmedabad Mill Workers.

After returning to India Gandhi wrote an important book *Satyagraha in South Africa*, in which he spelt out the basic outline of his technique of Satyagraha. He presented Satyagraha as an effective technique against any act of tyranny. In an essay in his journal *Young India* in 1924, he defined Satyagraha in the following words:

'Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience are but different branches of the same tree called *Satyagraha*. It is my *Kalpadruma* [a sacred tree, according to Hindu

mythology, which fulfils all the desires] – my *Jam-i-Jam* [a divine cup according to Islamic mythology] – the universal provider. Satyagraha is search for truth; and God is truth. Ahimsa or non-violence is the light that reveals that Truth to me. *Swaraj* for me is part of that Truth. This *Satyagraha* did not fail me in South Africa, Kheda or Champaran and in a host of other cases I could mention. It excludes all violence or hate .... I have repeatedly stated that Satyagraha never fails and that one perfect Satyagrahi is enough to vindicate Truth.....Satyagraha is an attribute of the spirit within. It is latent in every one of us. Like *Swaraj*, it is our birth right'.

To sum up this section, Gandhian strategy did not exist at any point in time in the form of a fully finished blue-print. It was constantly evolving with new elements being added to it. While understanding the process in which his strategy was shaping up, two factors – his dissatisfaction with the entire range of the existing nationalist politics and experiences in South Africa, need to be kept in mind.

32.5   ESSENCE OF THE GANDHIAN STRATEGY

It was primarily under Gandhi that the national movement acquired a clear-cut and long-term strategic framework. It was clear-cut because there were to be no ambiguities and confusions. It was long-term in the sense that it was not confined to any single episode or activity. All the different activities were connected to each other through a common strategy. The strategy was not to throw out British imperialism, but to create such conditions as to make it impossible for them to stay on in India. In other words, it was to be a strategy, not of the removal of imperialism through one big push, but through a prolonged struggle, carried out in various phases. The essence of Gandhian strategy can be understood better from a quote from Bipan Chandra:

The basic strategic perspective of the Indian National Congress was to wage a long-drawn out hegemonic struggle or in Gramscian terms a war of position – a struggle for the minds and hearts of men and women, constantly expanding its influence among the people through different channels and its different movements and phases or stages. The strategy had two basic thrusts. It was hegemonic and it alternated between phases of extra legal mass struggle and phases of truce functioning within the four walls of the law or in Gramscian terms between phases of war of manoeuvre and war of position. But both phases were geared to expanding the influence of the national movement among the people. The basic strategy was the same, but the tactics differed in different phases and over time. It was, moreover, not a strategy of gradual reform or 'compromise' with colonialism or of seeking co-option into it or of 'sharing' power and privilege with it. It was a strategy of active struggle by building reserves of hegemonic power with a view to wresting political power from the colonial state. Even though it represented an alternative not only to the path of armed struggle but in many ways also to the Leninist strategic framework, it shared with the latter a common strategic objective, the capture of state power. (Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement: The Long-Term Dynamics*, New Delhi, 2008, p. 40).

One necessary pre-condition for practising this strategy was to find out the nature of the adversary. Gandhi understood that the British did not rule India through pure force and coercion. They ruled India by trying to capture the minds and

hearts of the Indian people. In other words they tried to rule India by trying to establish their hegemony. The role of the national movement therefore was to try and erode the hegemony established by the British and establish a counter hegemony of the national movement, and to wage a struggle for the minds and hearts of the people.

The British established their hegemony in two major ways – by proving the benevolence of the British rule and by establishing its invincibility. The entire duration of the national movement – from the early to the Gandhian phase – was essentially a sustained demolition of the twin notions of British benevolence and British invincibility. The early nationalist leadership tried to counter the notion of the British benevolence with the idea of economic nationalism, i.e., that idea that the British rule was against the economic interests of Indian people as a whole. The Movement in its Gandhian phase built on this and tried to erode the invincibility of the British rule by successfully carrying out agitations against it. The following may be treated as some of the essential ingredients in the Gandhian strategy of struggle against British imperialism:

- It was based on acquiring a proper and scientific understanding of the nature of the adversary. Gandhi was quite clear that not all strategies can be effective in all situations. He understood that the colonial state in India was different from Hitler's Germany or Tsarist Russia. It was semi-authoritarian or based on a kind of legal authoritarianism. British rule was based on force but also on the creation of certain civil institutions. British created constitutional spaces and were also ready to offer concessions at times. Moreover it was a government which was accountable to British parliament and a vigilant public opinion in England. This nature of the British rule, and its understanding by Gandhi, played some role in the formulation of the specific Gandhian strategy against it. Gandhi was clear that the same strategy of counter hegemonic straggle may not be equally effective in all situations, and the strategies had to be context-specific.

- The struggle was to be fought with the help of the masses. The major strength of the Movement was to come from the masses and not from the intelligentsia or any particular class or any trained cadre. This required practicing the politics of class adjustment as against that of class-conflict. It was often not easy to reconcile the interests of conflicting classes involved in the same struggle. Reconciling the national interests with the class interests often became a very challenging task during the course of the Movement. People, including the peasants and workers were to be mobilized on an anti-imperialist plank.

- Masses were to be mobilised on some strong moral basis. Racial or religious issues were avoided in campaigns of mass mobilisations. Khilafat movement was more of an exception than a rule. Two important moral issues, which were taken up, were the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 and the Salt Satyagraha in 1930. The choice of raising important moral issues and avoiding strictly racial or religious issues was very significant. It ensured that the Movement did not degenerate into counter-racialism against the British people. Also the Movement enjoyed considerable support in British society and Media which often took up the Indian cause. The avoiding of religious issues was also necessary to ensure that the Movement did not take up the grievances of one religious community against another.

- The Movement was a continuous struggle but was to be fought through different stages. It alternated between phases of struggle and those of truce. Non-cooperation movement was withdrawn in 1922 and was followed by a prolonged period of constructive programme. It consisted of promotion of Khadi and spinning, promoting village industries, creating alternative national education, working for communal unity and harmony, struggle against untouchability, and boycott of foreign goods and liquor. Likewise the end of the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement in 1934 was followed by a constitutional phase in which Congress contested elections to provincial assemblies and formed a government in seven provinces. Thus phases of open confrontation with the authority were alternated by phases of working within the existing legal and constitutional framework.

  One major reason for carrying out the struggle in different phases was realisation by Gandhi that masses did not have inexhaustible reserves of energy and that they needed a break from active phases of struggle. Their capacity for making sacrifices (heavy fines, imprisonment, loss of jobs, loss of land among other) was finite and could not be taken for granted. Bipan Chandra writes: "…by its very nature a mass movement could not be carried on or sustained indefinitely for even for a prolonged period, that a mass movement must ebb sooner or later, that no mass movement could be on the rise permanently, that mass movements had to be short-lived, and that period of rest and consolidation, of 'breathing time' must intervene so that the movement could consolidate, recuperate and gather strength for the next round of struggle." (Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement*, p. 51). However, the fact that the struggle was launched in phases, should not be taken to mean that there a break between phases or that the broad objectives of the Movement did not carry from one phase to the other. Gandhi himself pointed out many times that it was essentially *one* struggle and would continue till the final objective was met. After the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement, he wrote: "..suspension of civil disobedience does not mean suspension of war. The latter can only end when India has a Constitution of her own making."

- Yet another aspect of the strategy was to occupy and capture whatever space was released by the British. In this manner power was not to be claimed in one go but bit-by-bit. So once the constitutional arena was opened up, however slowly and in a limited manner, it was utilized by the Movement after the Government of India Act of 1919 offering Dyarchy and after the Act of 1935 offering provincial autonomy. The idea was to extend the national movement to various spheres of socio-political life. So, just as the national movement entered villages through Gandhi's constructive programme, it also entered the legislative bodies through its constitutional activities. All these diverse activities were connected to each other through a common strategy.

- Finally, insistence on non-violence was very central to the strategy of the Movement. It was considered necessary that a prolonged struggle by the masses – as against a cadre-based underground movement – had to be non-violent. The human cost of mass participation in a violent struggle could be very high. Also a violent movement would find it difficult to mobilise masses on a sustained basis. It may be therefore argued that non-violence enabled

the Movement to acquire a wider support and a mass base. It should thus be clear that for the Movement it was a strategic necessity. Gandhi himself explained the strategic relevance of non-violence to his followers before starting his famous Dandi March in March 1930:

"Though the battle is to begin in a couple of days, how is it that you can come so fearlessly? I do not think any of you would be here if you had to face rifle-shots or bombs? But you have no fear of rifle-shots or bombs. Why? Supposing I had announced that I was going to launch a violent campaign, not necessarily with men armed with rifles, but even with sticks or stones, do you think the Government would have left me free until now? Can you show me an example in history (be it in England, America or Russia) where the state has tolerated violent defiance of authority for a single day? But here you know that the Government is puzzled and perplexed." (Quoted in Mridula Mukherjee, 'Introduction', in Sudhir Ghosh, *Gandhi's Emissary*, New Delhi, 2008, pp. xix-xx).

32.6 GANDHIAN STRATEGY: SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Once we begin to recognize the presence of a centralised strategic framework, we can also begin to see the link between the diverse sets of activities of the national movement. The focus on strategy also enables us to offer a fresh perspective on some of the contentious and controversial aspects of the Movement. In particular two major political decisions taken by Gandhi – withdrawal of the movement after violence in Chauri Chaura in 1922 and Gandhi –Irvin Pact signed in 1931 – have aroused considerable debate, both during their times and in subsequent history writings.

The withdrawal of the non cooperation movement after violence at Chauri Chaura has been understood in different ways. In its own times, it was considered to be a matter of political choice between violence and non-violence. Given Gandhi's uncompromising stand on this question, it was believed to be at the heart of Gandhi's decision to call off the movement. Leading Marxist historian R.P. Dutt looked at this question very differently. In his view, it indicated and confirmed the 'bourgeois' character of the Movement because Gandhi did not want the Movement to go out of control and turn against the propertied classes. Sumit Sarkar, in his article "The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism", explained the Gandhi-Irvin Pact by invoking the class character of the Movement. According to him, the Pact was signed because there was considerable pressure exercised by the capitalist class and the Pact was intended to protect the interests of the capitalist class. It was also the fear of the movement getting out of control, and the preference for a 'controlled mass movement' (as against a spontaneous mass movement), which was seen as the real reason behind many decisions taken by the leadership. These explanations were then generalized to construct an over-all picture of the national movement, supposedly fought under the control of the dominant capitalist class.

However, alternative explanations and generalisations can be found if we turn the searchlight towards 'strategy' as a crucial element behind various decisions taken by Gandhi. Withdrawing a phase of the Movement can then be seen as an integral part of Gandhian strategy. Also, constantly exploring the space for the

possibility of a truce or a settlement was also a part of the same strategy. As Gandhi himself said: "An honest satyagrahi should always be ready for a honourable settlement." Pacts and settlements were always an essential ingredient in Gandhian strategy.

Chauri Chaura was the last time Gandhi withdrew the movement citing violence as the main reason. During the Civil Disobedience Movement, there were instances of violence in Sholapur and also in some pockets in the North West Frontier Province. But Gandhi did not withdraw the struggle. The Quit India movement had turned violent as a whole. But Gandhi refused to condemn this violence on the ground that this violence was a reaction to the much larger violence inflicted by the colonial state.

However, while focusing on 'strategy' as an important component of the Movement, it is necessary not to look upon it as fixed or frozen. No blueprint of the strategy existed. It was never formally codified by Gandhi at any point. The strategy actually grew with practice. In this sense, the leaders of the Movement were teachers and learners at the same time. They were educating the participants of the struggle even as they were learning about it. The leaders were constantly experimenting, growing, changing and learning from previous experiences. All these, rather than any pre-existing codified doctrine, were the building blocks in the making of the strategy.

It was perhaps the essence of Gandhian strategy that the ultimate objective – overthrow of British imperialism – was not achieved in a sledge hammer way, but so gradually and in such a phased manner that the actual coming of independence did not appear very dramatic and spectacular. This aspect of Gandhian strategy was spelt out beautifully by the contemporary British historian Arnold Toynbee: "He [Gandhi] made it impossible for the British to go on ruling India, but at the same time he made it possible for us to abdicate without rancour and without dishonour.... In helping the British extricate themselves from this [imperial] entanglement, Gandhi did them a signal service for it is easier to acquire an empire than to disengage from one." (Quoted in B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics*, p. 71).

32.7 ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIC VISIONS

Gandhi's was the dominant strategy of the anti-imperialist struggle; but it was not the only one. During the course of Gandhi's leadership over the movement, there also existed rival and contending ideas of how to struggle against British imperialism.

One major challenge to the mainstream Gandhian strategy came from Jawaharlal Nehru, particularly in the 1930s. This was the period when Nehru was getting increasingly disillusioned with Gandhi's politics and growing distant from him. Nehru began to be very inspired by socialist ideas and grew convinced that the future choice for the entire world was between "some form of Communism and some form of Fascism". He became convinced about the desirability of Communism at a global level. At a national level, however, he looked upon the anti-imperialist struggle as an important pre-condition for the emergence of Socialism. Nehru travelled through the country, met many people, and was convinced that since 1857 there had never been such extraordinary bitterness

among the Indian people against British government, and such a passionate desire to get rid of it. This for Nehru was a revolutionary moment and he felt that this revolutionary mood was being distracted by Gandhi's focus on rural uplift and Harijan movement around 1933-34. Nehru was convinced that the moment for the big social transformation had arrived. British rule could be overthrown; the autocratic system of princely states would end; land system would be changed; and industries would be brought under public control. All this could be achieved in a short span of time. The removal of British imperialism would ignite the spark and other things would happen through a Domino effect. This was a radically different perspective and it brought Nehru to a brink of a political separation from Gandhi.

Briefly, the outline of Nehru's alternative strategy consisted of the following: The anti-imperialist struggle had reached a stage when there should be uncompromising and sustained confrontation with imperialism till it was overthrown. There could be no compromise or any setback on this. There could be no meeting ground and no reversion either to constitutionalism or to Gandhian constructive work. It was for this reason that Nehru was completely opposed to Congressmen forming governments in provinces under the Government of India Act, 1935. He saw it as a compromise with imperialism. Nehru's strategy was basically one of seizure of power, albeit through a non-violent mass struggle.

However Nehru knew that Gandhi did not share his worldview and soon discovered that it would be difficult to convert Gandhi to his position. He also underestimated Gandhi's influence on the Congress. Nehru realized that he would not be able to convert Congress to his new worldview. Therefore in order to push his revolutionary project, he would have to abandon the Congress. In this project Nehru had the support of some Socialist Congress leaders, who had formed a Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934. But Nehru also discovered that apart from a revolutionary project, he did not share very much in common with the Congress Socialists. Thus, Nehru's alternative strategy remained only on paper and in Nehru's thoughts and writings. It could not transform into a social force. Nehru did not have the organisational resources and did not want to abandon Congress as the vehicle for the anti-imperialist struggle. Nehru also realised that his pushing for an alternative strategy might split the Congress and the Movement. And Nehru was not ready to split up the anti-imperialist forces. After contemplating his alternative strategy during the early part of 1930s, Nehru eventually came around to accepting Gandhian strategy from 1937 onwards and agreed to fight the struggle more or less on terms stipulated by Gandhi.

There were other occasions when challenges were thrown up to Gandhi's leadership and strategy. For instance Subhash Chandra Bose tried, as Congress president in 1938 and 1939, to alter the trajectory of the anti-imperialist struggle. The conflict that followed resulted in Bose's alienation from the Congress and eventually his expulsion from Congress and his forming a separate 'Forward Block'. But without a doubt, Nehru's was the most serious attempt to challenge the dominant Gandhian strategy. As it happened, no major breaks occurred in the Congress strategy and the national movement continued to be fought under Gandhi's leadership following his strategy.

32.8 SUMMARY

The Indian nationalist movement, particularly during the Gandhian phase, was fought with the help of a clear-cut, long-term strategy. Gandhi was the architect of this strategy. The various changes, which occurred in the activities and the tactics of the Movement, were carried out broadly *within* the same strategy. This strategy did not exist in an *a priori* manner. Nor was there a ready-made blueprint for it. It grew and evolved with experiences. It was also not codified in any single piece of writing by Gandhi. Yet there are many indications (in Gandhi's writings, in his activities and also in the writings of some of his contemporaries) that Gandhi was pursuing the Movement with an acute sense of strategy.

This was a strategy not of a direct overthrow of imperialism, but of a prolonged bit-by-bit struggle, conducted in many phases. The main objective of the strategy was to create such conditions in which the British would find it impossible to rule India and would be compelled to leave. This strategy was partly a result of the nature of British imperialism in India, and an acute understanding of that nature by the leadership of the Movement. The British did not rule India with brute force but in a semi-authoritarian manner, by creating a support base among Indians and by trying to reach out to their minds and hearts. As against this, the strategy of the national movement was to try to erode the hegemony of the colonial rulers and replace it with the counter-hegemony of the national movement.

Non-violent struggle, active participation of the masses, struggle to be launched in stages, phases of agitation to be alternated with phases of constructive programme, readiness for a settlement or a compromise (as in Gandhi-Irwin pact of 1931), making use of whatever constitutional spaces that were released by the British, constantly enlarging the orbit of the national movement to newer groups and areas, were some of the essential components of the Gandhian strategy.

This strategic framework of Gandhi received the most serious challenge from Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1930s. He proposed an alternative strategy of one big round of struggle against imperialism without any breaks, retreats or compromises till imperialism was overthrown. Such a militant struggle, according to Nehru, would also prepare the Indian society for a radical transformation of the social order along socialist lines. However, Nehru soon realised that there was not enough support for his strategy within Congress and that his pushing for an alternative might split the Congress and the anti-imperialist movement. Nehru also realised that Congress was the most effective platform for the anti-imperialist struggle and that any weakening of the Congress would also weaken the struggle. Therefore Nehru did not push his alternative vision to the point of the break and, by 1937, retreated by agreeing to fight British imperialism within the parameters of the Gandhian strategy of struggle.

32.9 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the nature of the state in colonial India.

2) Describe the Gandhian strategy to fight against imperialism in India.

3) What were other strategies which were presented as alternatives to the Gandhian strategy?

UNIT 33 NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM*

Structure

33.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is on the experiences of the nationalist leadership with the communal problem. It talks about how the nationalist leadership understood the communal question and what attempts it made to deal with the communal question. It will familiarise you with the central position which the communal problem acquired throughout the life of the nationalist movement and how a handling of the communal question became a virtual pre-condition to the successful operation of the nationalist struggle. The Unit begins with an overview of communalism as it emerged in Indian society and politics from the 19th century onwards. It then goes into the question of the relationship of communalism with the nationalist movement. It describes the various efforts made by the Congress leadership to come to terms with the communal problem. It also examines and evaluates the efforts of the Congress leadership and their relevance. Finally it focuses on Jawaharlal Nehru and his handling of the communal question.

33.2 THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

The 19th century in Indian history was a period of a great transformation. Never before had changes taken place at such a pace and with such intensity. The British rule established itself very firmly and began to penetrate the interiors of the Indian society. This was also the period of the emergence of the modern industrial economy, mobility and dislocation.

Under the impact of these monumental changes, the traditional social structure too began to undergo transformation. The story of the kind of changes that came about has been mentioned in M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*. In a nutshell, India's community structure went through a process of dissolution and reconfiguration. India's traditional community structure was generally marked by plurality and syncretism. A large number of small and local communities existed with fuzzy and porous dividing lines. In particular, in as far as religious

---

life was concerned, there was considerable syncretism and overlap between various religious communities. For pre-19th century Indian society, it was not possible to talk of *A Hindu community* or *A Muslim community*. It would be more appropriate to refer to multiple Hindu communities, multiple Muslim communities, and multiple communities that were both at the same time. Religious life was lived more at a ritualistic level. The impact of doctrine or centralized tenets was, at best minimal in the lives of ordinary Hindus and Muslims. In other words the religious life of common people was marked less by centralized doctrines and scriptures and more by local rituals and folk practices. The general religious traditions of popular Hinduism and popular Islam did not appear very divergent from each other. There are any number of examples to corroborate this thesis from Bengal and Punjab, two important regions with a Muslim majority. For both these regions, it has been recorded by scholars that the influence of high scholastic Islam was very minimal and that of low, Sufi and syncretic Islam, very deep and pervasive. This was also true of Hindus and other communities.

Broadly speaking, the mammoth changes in the 19th century began to alter India's community profile in two directions. On the one hand, a national community of Indian people, cutting across region, religion and culture, began to be formed. On the other, the diverse raw material of Indian religious communities began to give way to internally standardized, externally differentiated, neatly segregated, pan-Indian communities of Hindus and Muslims. In other words, something like a Hindu community with an all-India consciousness and a Muslim community with a similar all-India consciousness began to emerge. Their religious differences became sharp and those of culture, language and region began to become relatively less important. New differences also got invented.

It is necessary to emphasize here that this altered community profile was a product of 19th century transformation. It is important to recognize the empirical reality of the making of pan-Indian religious communities. It is however equally important to recognize that they did not always exist. India's community profile at the beginning of the 19th century was dramatically different from what it became at the beginning of the 20th century.

This development was extremely conducive for the growth of the communal politics. By communalism, we refer to an ideology that sought to transform religious communities into political constituencies. Two different but inter-connected processes were involved in the politics of communalism: 1) Creation of pan-Indian communities of Hindus and Muslims; and 2) placing of these communities at the service of large political mobilizations.

The communal politics, which developed at the beginning of the 20th century, was initially confined to the tiny elite minority of the society. The wider public was untouched by it. However, by the 1920s, this politics began to influence the middle classes. By the late 1930s and 40s, it also acquired a mass base. The kind of demands raised from the platform of the communal politics, easily confirms its class character in different phases. In the initial elite phase, the major demand was for reservation of seats in the legislative bodies. By 1920s, this demand was enlarged to include reservation of jobs and protection of culture and language of religious communities. However, from the late 1930s onwards, communalism began to acquire a mass base. It was during this period that Muslim League, the communal organisation claiming to represent the Muslims, began to argue that

lives of all Muslims were unsafe in India and that they could live with dignity only if they had a separate homeland of their own.

It should also be added here that the British government promoted and encouraged communal politics through a whole range of ways and measures. They created certain institutional structures which had the effect of politically separating Hindus from Muslims. In particular reference should be made of the practice of separate electorates initiated by the British in 1909 through an Act. According to this Act, entirely separate electoral procedures were created for Muslims and Hindus. When electoral democracy was started for Indian society, it was done by creating separate electoral constituencies, voters and candidates on the basis of religion. This meant that separate constituencies were designated as Muslim constituencies. A separate voter list, consisting only of Muslims was prepared. Only Muslim candidates could stand from these Muslim seats, having only Muslim votes. Under this arrangement, it was not possible for a Hindu to vote for a Muslim and vice-versa. It was clear that under such a system, political leaders representing specific religious communities had a good chance of becoming successful. Those political leaders with a support base in both communities, could never succeed because their support base itself was divided.

The system of separate electorates, was the single largest factor responsible for the emergence and the spread of communal politics. The communal politics was initially confined to a small segment of the population, when the voting rights were restricted. Gradually however, as the voting rights began to be extended to more people, so was the possibility of communalism. It is really a curious feature of Indian politics till 1947, that the increasing communalisation of Indian society and politics was integrally connected with the increasing democratisation of Indian society and politics. Given the peculiar nature of electoral politics introduced by the British, democratisation and communalisation went hand-in-hand.

33.3 COMMUNAL PROBLEM AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

The Indian national movement was based on the twin ideas of anti-imperialism and national unity. These two ideas were interconnected but not identical. The tradition of anti-imperialism was much older and dated back to the days of British conquest. Ever since the British rule was established, different groups – peasants, tribals, traditional zamindars, chieftains – had rebelled against it at different points and places. The Rebellion of 1857 was actually a culmination of traditional anti-imperialist rebellions. With the gradual emergence of an Indian nation since the late 19th century, the old tradition of anti-imperialism found a new ally in national unity. From now onwards, an organic connection developed between the two. It began to be argued, quite correctly, that an effective anti-imperialist protest could develop only if it was combined with national unity. National unity meant a coming together of all Indians – cutting across differences of religion, culture, language and region – on a common platform and acquiring a common national consciousness.

It should be quite clear that communalism stood as the single most serious obstacle to this project of national unity. Thus, political national unity and political communal unity were separate trajectories, basically opposed to each other. One

could succeed only at the expense of the other. This reality of Indian polity had been clearly understood both by the colonial state and the leaders of the national movement. But they derived very different conclusions from it. The colonial state understood that an effective counterpoise to the growing national movement could be developed by preventing national unity and by promoting inter-religious division in Indian politics. The colonial state systematically pursued its politics of preventing national unity throughout. The leaders of the national movement, on the other hand, decided to handle sensitive religious matters in such a manner as not to create friction and division across religions. For instance, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution, at its fourth session in Allahabad in 1888, not to take up any issue concerning a religious community, if the majority of that community was opposed to it. These were initial efforts to try and discourage any kind of religious divide within the ranks of Congress.

However, certain developments of the late 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century adversely affected these fragile though sincere efforts of the nationalist leadership, and complicated the issue. Let us briefly look at some of these developments:

- The Arya Samaj was formed in 1875 and became quite active in north India. The organization attempted to consolidate Hindus on a common social platform. A militant branch of the Arya Samaj started a campaign called *Shudhi* (purification), which was based on a re-conversion of those Hindus, who had been earlier converted to other faiths. The activities of the Arya Samaj however were confined to the field of education and reform. Around the same time, a cultural and educational movement developed among the Muslim elite of north India, called the Aligarh movement. Syed Ahmed Khan, the leader of the Aligarh movement, wanted to develop a partnership between the Muslim elite and the British government. So when the Congress was formed in 1885, he made an appeal to Muslims to stay away from it. These two institutions – Arya Samaj and Aligarh movement – effectively prevented unity of Hindu and Muslim elite of north India.

- In 1905, Congress launched Swadeshi movement against the decision of the British government to partition the province of Bengal into two. The proposed partition was such that one part of Bengal was to have a Muslim majority. The British government projected the partition as something that would benefit the Muslims. The British propaganda was very successful and the Muslims stayed away from the Swadeshi movement. Though in its basic character, the movement was essentially anti-imperialist, yet it acquired a Hindu identification. By the end of the movement in 1908, the Hindu-Muslim divide had become deeper.

- Formation of All India Muslim League (AIML) in 1906 and All India Hindu Mahasabha (AIHMS) in 1915, added a new dimension to the communal problem. These two organisations claimed to represent the Muslims and Hindus, respectively. The antagonism between the two religious communities got a new fillip with the formations of these organisations. It also created new challenges for Congress as representing the politics of secular nationalism.

33.4 THE CONGRESS APPROACH TOWARDS THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

It was thus clear to Congress leadership that the communal problem was a huge obstacle in the anti-imperialist struggle and that it was absolutely necessary to address and solve the communal problem.

The available evidence suggests that the Congress leadership did not approach this question with a well-rounded and comprehensive strategic framework. Rather the leadership treated this question as a contingency and dealt with it on the basis of immediate political situation. To put it differently, the leadership tried to handle the communal problem with a series of tactical options, tried at different points in time. These tactical options were not necessarily connected with each other and sometimes they were also inconsistent with each other. This was completely in contrast with the Congress approach towards the anti-imperialist question. The anti-imperialist struggle, particularly from 1920 onwards, was fought within a well-rounded and comprehensive strategic framework. Nothing like a centralized strategy existed *vis-a-vis* the communal problem.

Basically, at the level of a problem to be solved, communal problem meant three things to Congress leadership:

1) How to bring Muslims into the Congress fold?

2) How to handle Muslim League with its ever increasing demands?

3) How to prevent Hindu Mahasabha from becoming the spokesman of Hindus?

Out of the three the third appeared the simplest and easiest to achieve. Congress had effectively neutralised any possible threat emanating from Hindu Mahasabha. As mentioned earlier, a larger number of Hindus had joined Congress, more so after the Swadeshi movement. Congress had disseminated the ideas of territorial nationalism to them. Given the strong base Congress had acquired among Hindus, it appeared unlikely that Hindu Mahasabha, with its narrow base and elitist politics, would be able to make a dent in the Congress bastion and be able to wean away Hindus from the Congress fold.

Initially the main focus of the Congress was mainly on how to bring Muslims into Congress. On this question the approach of the leadership consisted of four different tactical options tried at different times: a) pacts and negotiations, b) aiming for an exclusive Muslim mobilisation, such as the one tried during the Khilafat movement, c) hoping to rope in Muslims through general nationalist or class appeal and mobilisation, and d) through maintaining active Congress presence inside Muslim League and other organisations of Muslims. Quite often one option was tried after the other one had been exhausted. Different tactical options employed by the leadership did not form parts of a package, but existed quite independent of, and unrelated to, each other.

The Lucknow Pact signed in 1916 between Congress and Muslim League was based on the idea that Muslim League was truly representative of Muslims. Congress granted concessions to Muslim in recognition of this idea. It was hoped by Congress leadership that a pact with Muslim League would enable it to gain access to Muslims. However, the pact was based on the promise of certain concessions. It became redundant once British government granted more

concessions, as part of Government of India Act of 1919, than Congress had promised.

The Khilafat movement, fought under Gandhi's leadership provided yet another opportunity to Congress to bring Muslims within its fold. The Khilafat movement was essentially the product of a global political climate in which the ideas of anti-imperialism and of pan-Islamism tended to go hand in hand. Its manifestation in India was an alliance between the nationalist and the Islamic forces. The Khilafat movement as a tactics for Muslim mobilisation was quite successful during the course of the movement. Large number of Muslims became a part of Congress activities. There was a marked decline in communal activities. Conflict around cow slaughter and music before mosque came down significantly.

However the grand alliance ended with the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement following the violence at Chauri-Chaura, and the annulment of the Khilafat issue in Turkey itself because of the overthrow of the institution of Khalifa there. The end of the alliance turned out to be bitter and there was a significant increase in communal activities. It has been argued by historians that the Khilafat experiment damaged the cause of secular nationalism by legitimizing religion's entry into politics and thus consolidating communalism in the long run. Bipan Chandra writes:

...since the Muslim masses and lower middle classes were brought into the anti-imperialist movement through an agreement with the top leaders and on a religious question, they came into it with their existing consciousness intact. They joined the movement as a matter of religiosity and not for the protection and advancement of their democratic and economic rights. What is even more important, the very terms of this agreement prevented Gandhi and the nationalist leadership from using this opportunity to impart a modern, secular, democratic and anti-imperialist consciousness or understanding of social forces to the Muslim masses who participated in the non-cooperation-cum-Khilafat-Movement. (Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, p. 260.)

The emergence of the left-wing politics since the late 1920s provided a political alternative to the Khilafat movement. Now it was not considered necessary to bring religion into politics in order to bring Muslims into Congress. In fact, such an approach was considered not just undesirable but also outdated and medieval, under left-wing influence. Jawaharlal Nehru was convinced that Religion was actually the source of all communal troubles and that it had to be kept out of every aspect of public life. It now began to be argued by some Congress leaders that Congress should reach out to Muslims, *not as Muslims*, but as part of larger pools of workers, peasants, middle classes etc., or simply as Indians. It was felt that a separate religious appeal was unnecessary. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, an important Congress leader from UP, issued an interesting statement in 1937, making it clear that the pacts between religious communities and with communal organisations were a thing of the past:

Maulana Shaukat Ali and Sri Jinnah should realise that this is not the India of 1920s. We have moved ahead and if Sri Jinnah and Maulana Shaukat Ali do not keep up with the times, it is not our fault. Earlier cleavages [in the society] are fast disappearing and are being replaced by new ones. From 1920 to 1930 major communities were religious – Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsees, Sikhs etc.... Today

they have been replaced by communities based on class – Taluqdars, Zamindars, Kisans ...workers, factory owners and customers. Those who have worked in the villages in the previous elections know that Muslim Kisans are as interested in, and influenced by, the peasant-related activity of the Congress as the Hindus. This is only natural.... We are [therefore] not going to convene a meeting of the two communities to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem. (Quoted in Salil Misra, *A Narrative of Communal Politics, Uttar Pradesh, 1937-39*, p. 227.)

The formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 provided a further fillip to this tendency which relied upon class categories, rather than religious ones, to bring more and more Muslims into Congress.

Almost simultaneously with this, another stream of thought developed within Congress on how to effectively deal with communal bodies. It consisted of maintaining an active presence in the communal organisations to prevent their further slide down the communal road. As part of this thinking, some Congress leaders joined either Muslim League or Hindu Mahasabha. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai (till he died in 1928) and B.S. Moonje were members of both Congress and Hindu Mahasabha. Likewise Suleiman Ansari, Hafiz Ibrahim, M.C. Chagla and Khaliquzzaman were simultaneously members of both Congress and Muslims League. Important Congress leaders, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Asaf Ali often attended the sessions of Muslim League in the 1920s. Sometimes Congress leaders also made speeches from Muslim League platform.

It seems that this approach of containing communalism from within and through some kind of infiltration was more in vogue in the 1920s and went out of practice in the 1930s. From late 1920s onwards, the conflicts between Congress and Muslim League on the one hand, and Congress and Mahasabha on the other, increased quite a bit and the Congress leaders found it difficult to retain a foothold in both the organisations. However, it was only in 1938 that Congress high command forbade the office bearers of Congress to maintain dual membership with communal organisations such as Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha.

The year 1937 is very crucial as far as Congress approach to communal question is concerned. It was in this year that the first general elections were held under separate electorates. The election results revealed some important facts. Congress had done very badly in exclusively Muslim seats, consisting exclusively of Muslim voters. Out of a total of 485 Muslim seats, Congress contested only 58 and won 26. However, what was even more interesting was that even Muslim League did not do too well in Muslim seats. It got a little over hundred seats, around 20% of the total Muslim seats and around 5% of total Muslim votes. It was clear that although Muslim League had done better than Congress in Muslim seats, it was nowhere near a satisfactory performance for the League. Most of the Muslim seats had gone either to regional parties, or to independent candidates or to local small parties. It was also clear that the Muslim voters were as yet outside any major political ideological influence, either of the nationalist variety or of the communal variety.

It was against this background that Jawaharlal Nehru came out with a new approach. The new approach consisted of ignoring the communal organisations because the election results had clearly brought out their unrepresentative

character. Instead Congress should reach out directly to the masses of Muslims and bring them into its fold. It was hoped that in this way Congress would be able to deal effectively with the communal problem. Nehru, as Congress President, issued a circular to all Provincial Congress Committees to 'make a special effort to enrol Muslim Congress members'. It started the Muslim Mass Contact Programme by Congress in April 1937. This programme alarmed the Muslim League leadership which decided to initiate a similar programme of reaching out to Muslim masses. The Congress campaign went on till 1939 after which it subsided and eventually petered out. In this way, by around 1940, Congress leadership had tried a whole range of options to deal with the communal problem.

33.5 AN APPRAISAL OF THE CONGRESS APPROACH

In general it can be said that the Congress approach met with both success and failure. Or rather, it succeeded in some areas and failed in some others.

Congress approach in handling Hindu communalism and its organisation the Hindu Mahasabha, was extremely successful. A strong Hindu communal organisation was potentially capable of reducing Congress to a position of political insignificance. But that did not happen. A large body of Hindus had joined Congress fairly early on, certainly from the days of Swadeshi movement, well before the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha. They remained with Congress even after the formation of Mahasabha. The Hindu Mahasabha remained an elite organisation, devoid of larger support. It is therefore not surprising that it was ignored by all the other major political forces of the time – British, Congress and Muslim League. Hindu Mahasabha contested the general elections of 1937 and 1946 but failed to get the political support of Hindus. In the crucial elections of 1946, its vote share was around 1% of total Hindu votes. Throughout the period of the national movement, the forces of Hindu communalism remained very weak. It can be argued that Congress, through its activities, had succeeded in disseminating the idea of territorial nationalism to a majority of Hindus. This certainly was a major accomplishment of Congress leadership.

However in certain other respects, the Congress approach has to be considered a failure. If one major objective of the Congress was to bring Muslims into its fold and defeat the Muslim communal organisations politically and ideologically, then obviously the Congress approach did not succeed. All the evidence suggests that almost till the end, Muslim participation in the national movement remained very low. And Muslim communalism kept growing and increasing its demands. The ultimate demand came in 1940 when Muslim League declared that Indian Muslims were not a minority but a nation and therefore entitled to have a separate nation state of their own. This was a demand for a partition of India. This demand became successful in 1947 when the British, before leaving, partitioned India into two separate nation-states, India and Pakistan.

At an elementary level, it may be said that the Congress approach on the communal question lacked the consensus it had on the anti-imperialist issue. Often plans were made by individual leaders, but were implemented by the larger organisation only in a half-hearted manner. This was for instance the case with some of the schemes initiated by Nehru and Gandhi in the 1930s. The Congress leadership

did not fully realise the rapid pace at which communalism, particularly its Muslim variant, was growing. The leadership therefore often suggested mechanisms that may have been appropriate for the earlier phase of communalism, but not applicable under changed circumstances. To take an example, in his correspondence and negotiations with Jinnah during 1937-38, Nehru kept asking Jinnah what his demands were. Once Congress knew what the major Muslim League demands were, they would try to address them. Such an approach was perfectly appropriate for the communal situation prevalent in the 1920s. In the 1920s the politics of communalism essentially represented a set of demands. British government and Congress were the acknowledged major political forces, and communal leaders of different persuasions were putting forward their demands either to British or to Congress. However, by the 1930s, important changes came about in the character of Muslim communalism. Muslim League was now fighting for parity, to be treated at par with Congress and to be recognized as the only authoritative body representative of Indian Muslims. In a decade's time Muslim League had been transformed from a petitioning body into an organisation claiming equal status with the Congress. In such a scenario, Nehru asking Jinnah about his demands obviously made no sense and only infuriated Jinnah. The Nehru-Jinnah negotiations broke down, mainly because of a basic incompatibility in how the two parties understood each other.

As mentioned in the previous section, Nehru, as Congress president declared in 1937 that they would ignore the communal leaders and reach out directly to Muslim masses. Once Muslim masses joined Congress, the communal problem would be solved easily, if not automatically. In itself this was a sound approach and certainly had the potentials of being successful. The trouble was that when Congress started its Muslim mass contact campaign, Muslim League also started its own campaign of mass contact. By 1939-40, it had become quite clear that the Muslim League campaign had been much more successful and a large body of Muslims had joined Muslim League. Muslim League in the 1940s was no longer an elite organisation that could be easily ignored. The new situation obviously required a new approach from Congress. The earlier approach of ignoring Muslim League, as suggested by Nehru, could only work in a context when Muslim League was a tiny insignificant body. But once it became popular and powerful, and was also recognised by the British government, it would be simply counter-productive to ignore it.

The trouble however was that as Muslim League became more popular, it also became more stridently communal. It entered a phase of extreme communalism. Its major demand now was a separate homeland for Indian Muslims. This was a difficult demand to meet for a nationalist body like Congress. So at a time when it was necessary for Congress to come to terms with Muslim League (because it had become popular), it also became very difficult for Congress (because the League had begun demanding Pakistan). Thus, it was difficult for the Congress to evolve a satisfactory mechanism to deal with Muslim League. Muslim League's simultaneous popularisation and shift to extreme communalism had serious implications for Congress approach. Had Muslim League become popular without shifting to extreme communalism, it would have been possible – and relatively easy – to negotiate and deal with it. On the other hand, had Muslim League had shifted to extreme communalism without becoming popular it would have been possible for Congress to ignore it. But that was not to be.

Apart from the basic inability to effectively come to terms with communalism, its politics, organisations and the leadership, a large number of other weaknesses within Congress have also been pointed out by various scholars. The essentially middle class character of the Congress leadership, inability or refusal to offer more concessions to Muslim League and not doing enough to win its political support, a right wing hegemony within Congress leadership thwarting the efforts of the organisation to reach out to Muslims, and the presence of many Hindu revivalist elements within Congress leadership making it difficult for Muslims to join Congress, have been some of the explanations offered for the failure of Congress to incorporate Muslims into the national movement in large numbers. It would be safe to conclude that the inability, or failure, of the leadership of the national movement to evolve and implement a comprehensive strategy to counter communalism, must constitute an important part of the explanation for the emergence of communalism in India.

33.6 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND COMMUNALISM

While studying the Congress approach towards the communal question, it is very necessary to deal specifically with the ideas and activities of Jawaharlal Nehru vis-à-vis the communal question. Nehru, more than any other Congress leader, paid attention to this question, wrote about it and often formulated the Congress approach to this question. In his long political career, many changes came about in his understanding of communalism as a political phenomenon.

Nehru was a pioneer on an understanding of communalism. Many of the social science ideas on communalism – consensual as well as contentious – actually go back to Nehru. It would be difficult to attempt a historical analysis of communalism in India without referring to Nehru's ideas. His ideas were constantly growing and evolving, as far as communalism is concerned. However, the 1930s, particularly the period 1932-37 is the most crucial period for his intellectual engagement with the issue. It was during this period that major breakthroughs occurred in his thinking and remained with him in the subsequent period. Broadly speaking, following ideas may be treated as the major building blocks in Nehru's understanding of communalism. These ideas also shaped the approaches that were adopted during this period by Congress vis-a-vis the communal problem:

- Nehru increasingly began to see that communalism was not simply a question of religion, or of religious differences, or only a matter of violence. He set out to explore the social and economic roots of the communal question in India. He began to look upon it as essentially a middle class problem, rooted in the insecurities, anxieties and the uneven development of the middle classes in India. In other words, Nehru began to apply a Marxian approach to an understanding of the communal problem. Prior to Nehru, the communal question was often seen primarily in terms of conflict between religious communities and politics based on those conflicts.

- An extension of this understanding was that he looked upon the problem as a 'myth' or as something false. By that he did not mean that it was empirically false or that it did not exist, but that it did not correctly represent the social reality. It claimed to protect religion but in reality it only served the narrow interests of the middle and the upper classes. Thus he began to see

communalism as a tool in the hands of the vested interests. He argued that communalism was a smoke screen to disguise the narrow class interests of the elites.

- Nehru was probably the first the talk separately of minority and majority communalisms, or rather Muslim and Hindu communalism. In an essay, he provided the novel thesis that whereas the communalism of the majority can easily disguise as some kind of nationalism, the minority communalism has to emphasis its separateness. This may impart some respectability to the communalism of the majority, but in reality both are equally anti-people and dangerous.

- Nehru made a distinction between communalism borne out of fear and insecurity, and communalism as motivated by narrow selfish interests. He called former "Honest Communalism" and latter "False Communalism". He made a historic statement in one of his essays: "Honest Communalism is fear; false communalism is political reaction."

- He also saw communalism as a weapon in the hands of those opposed to progress and change. Such elements were also supported by the British. It was not just a part of their policy of discrediting anti-imperialist Indian nationalism. It also fitted in with their tendency of aligning with the most conservative sections of the Indian population. He equated communalism with obscurantism and medievalism and something that was essentially opposed to progress and a modern outlook.

All these points were important inputs into a general understanding of communalism that developed in India from 1940s onwards. However, with the advantage of hindsight, we should also point out two major limitations in the way Nehru looked at communalism:

1) When communalism, particularly Muslim communalism, began to break out of the middle class fold and acquire mass support, particularly after 1937, Nehru welcomed this development. He appeared convinced at this stage that communalism could not remain reactionary and become a mass force at the same time. He hoped that the popular pressure would force the Muslim League to moderate and dilute its communalism. That a popular communalism was somehow a contradiction in terms; it could either be popular or communal but not both. Nehru was optimistic that the entry of masses would cleanse the Muslim League of its negative reactionary character. Nehru did not foresee that this development could transform communalism itself into a powerful mass force. Once that happened, it would be virtually impossible to effectively oppose it. Thus, once this happened, the nationalist forces were quite helpless in the face of communalism backed up by mass support.

2) Nehru's search for economic roots of communalism also culminated in the creation of a somewhat economistic and deterministic position on communalism. It was also the result of a mechanical application of Marxism to the important social and political problems of the times. He understood communalism to a product of a particular kind of political economy promoted by British imperialism. From here he went on to infer that the removal of

imperialism and economic development would be able to rid Indian society of communalism. He perhaps did not see the need for a powerful ideological campaign against communalism, particularly after independence. He believed that the communal consciousness among the people was rooted in the existing material conditions. Therefore a transformation of the material conditions would be successful in altering that consciousness. He did not foresee that an ideology, after establishing firm roots in the minds and hearts of the people, can acquire an independent life of its own.

To sum up this section, Nehru should be credited with having made an important contribution to the rich historiography that developed on communalism. Many of the ideas were initiated by Nehru and subsequently developed by other social scientists. The socio-economic background to communalism, distinctions between minority and majority communalism, class character of communalism, communal consciousness being 'false', communalism as the Indian brand of Fascism are some of the ideas that began with Nehru and were developed further by historians.

33.7   SUMMARY

This Unit has argued the following points:

* The 19th century in Indian history experienced the unfolding of a new type of state system and a new type of economy. Under this stimulus, the traditional Indian social structure began to undergo a transformation. This transformation altered India's community profile in extremely profound ways. By the end of the 19th century, Indian society witnessed the emergence of pan-Indian, internally standardized, externally differentiated, religious communities of Hindus and Muslims. This transformed community structure was extremely conducive for communalism. Under the stimulus of communalism, the pan-Indian religious communities of Hindus and Muslims were also transformed as political constituencies.

* The nationalist struggle was based on the twin ideas of anti-imperialism and national unity. The ideal of national unity could be seriously damaged by the development of communal politics. Certain developments during the late 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century created a political divide between Hindus and Muslims. It was therefore imperative for the nationalist leadership to try and effectively deal with communal politics, if the idea of Indian nationalism was to survive politically.

* During the initial decades of the nationalist struggle, the Congress leadership did not approach this question with a coordinated and centralized strategic framework. Instead, the leadership tried a whole range of different tactical options at different points. On the whole, although the Congress was successful in containing the Hindu Mahasabha, it failed to bring in a large number of Muslims within its folds. The year 1937 brought a new dimension to communal politics. The results of the first general elections, held under separate electorates, demonstrated that Indian Muslim voters had not as yet been successfully mobilised either by the nationalist forces or by the communal ones. This was seen as an opportunity by Nehru to start a Muslim mass contact campaign seeking to mobilise Muslims on a Congress platform. But the Congress campaign petered out after 1939.

- During the post-1937 period, Muslim League gradually acquired a mass base. It was also transformed in the direction of extreme communalism. In 1940, it put forward the demand for Pakistan, as a separate nation-state of Indian Muslims. The simultaneous popularisation and communalisation of Muslim League made it extremely difficult for the Congress leadership to effectively deal with the communal problem.

The further development eventually culminated in 1947 in the partition of the sub-continent. The year 1947 was a year both of the great triumph and a huge tragedy for Indian nationalism. Although India became independent from imperialist control, the *raison detre* of Indian nationalism, it was accompanied by the partition. The inability to maintain the unity of the country on the eve of independence must rank as one of the major failures of the ideology of Indian nationalism.

33.8 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the nature of communalism before 1920.

2) What were the changes in the communal politics in the wake of the Government of India Act of 1919 and the Khilafat Movement?

3) Explain the factors responsible for the failure of the Congress to contain the Muslim League and its brand of communal politics.

4) Critically analyse Nehru's views on communalism.

UNIT 34   MAKING OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION*

Structure

34.1   INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India was adopted on 26th November, 1949, which means it was finalised by the Constituent Assembly on that day. But it became operative two months after its adoption, i.e., on 26th January, 1950, which is also known as the date of its "commencement". However, some provision of it (those relating to citisenship, elections, provisional Parliament, temporary and transitional provisions) had become operative on 26th November, 1949 itself. The reasons for its commencement after two months of its adoption was to signify the January 26th as the original date as date of achievement of Independence. It is important to note that the Constitution on India is product of long drawn process and deliberations. This Unit deals with some issues relating to the making of the Indian Constitution. After going through this Unit, you will be able to learn about the:

- stages of constitution making prior to the formation of Constituent Assembly;

- nature of representation of the Constituent Assembly;

- philosophy of the Indian Constitution; and

- debate within the Constituent Assembly on some of the salient features of the Indian Constitution.

34.2   EVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION 1858-1935

The Constitution of India embodies the provisions providing basic democratic rights of human beings including the persons who are not the citizens of the country. It also embodies provisions for the availability of the institutions for

---

legislation, execution and jurisdiction for the fulfillment of these rights. It presents vision for the social transformation and deepening of democracy. The process of evolution of democratic institutions and rights had started much before the Constituent Assembly really made the Constitution of India. It, however, must be underlined that the features of democratic institutions and values which were introduced during the colonial period were meant to serve the colonial interests in contrast the purpose of the provisions of the Constitution made by the Constituent Assembly of India.

Although the Indian Constitution was result of the deliberations (from Dec 9, 1947 to November 26, 1949) of the Constituent Assembly of the country, some of its features had evolved over a long time through various Acts i.e., from 1958 to 1935. The measures by the colonial authorities to introduce the institutions of governance were indeed responses to the protests against the British. If the transfer of rule from the East India Company was a reaction to revolt of 1857, subsequent Acts were the British response to the national movement against them. The main purpose of doing so was to continue colonial rule and to adapt it to the changing challenges. With the transfer of power from the East India Company to the British Crown, the British Parliament got involved in managing affairs of India. For this purpose it introduced different rules which laid the foundation of our constitution or provided a background to it. During this period the British Parliament introduced Acts, which defined nature of organs of government –judiciary and executive; introduced the notion of representative democracy, though of a limited nature, decentralisation, minority rights/communal representation and provincial autonomy. It is important to note that these form significant features of the Constitution which commenced in Independent India. As mentioned earlier, the nature of these provisions, however, was different from those the Constitution which people of India adopted. These provisions were introduced through different Acts in the pre-Independence period – Government of India Acts – of 1857, 1919 and 1935; The Council of India Acts of 1861, 1892; The Morely-Minto Reforms 1909. These Acts were consolidated into a single Act, i.e., Government of India Act of 1935. This Act aimed at putting separate provisions about the legislative, executive and judicial branches which till now scattered in different Acts into one single Act. As you know the Congress opposed the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1919 and launched non-cooperation movement. And in response the British government appointed the Simon Commission to review the functioning of the Act of 1919. Though Simon Commission was boycotted by the Congress, a large section of people did give representations to the Simon Commission. The Simon Commission submitted its report in 1930. The British government brought up the Simon Commission Report for discussion in the Round Table Conference in London. However, the British Prime Minister issued a "Communal Award" on August 4, 1932, which underlined that before discussion of the Simon Commission Report there Hindus and Muslims have to agree to some agreement for solution. It noted that the division between Hindus and Muslims had widened after the introduction of the Government of India Act, 1919. Following the discussion in the Round Table Conference, the British Government passed Government of India Act, 1935, which provided for separate representations to Muslims, Sikhs, the Europeans, Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians. In the light of the Government of India Act, 1935, the election to the provincial assembly was held in 1937, and the Congress formed government in many provinces. The Congress governments, however, could not complete their terms and had to resign before completing their terms.

These developments took place in the backdrop of clamouring for formation of constitution for Indians by themselves. In 1928 the first attempt to prepare a Constitution of India was made in the Nehru Report in the conference of the established All India parties (except the Justice Party in Madras and Unionist Party in Punjab). The Nehru Report demanded universal suffrage for adults and responsible government both in the centre and the provinces. It, however, supported the Dominion Status and not complete independence, which disappointed the younger generation of the Congress. Indeed, in 1934 the Congress officially demanded a constitution of Indian people, without the interference of outsiders. The Indian National Congress realised this with the failure of the Statutory Commission and Round Table Conference. Although the demand for the swaraj (self-rule) by the National leaders was made during the non-cooperation movement in 1922, it was only in 1938 that Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress demanded that a Constituent Assembly be formed to draft a Constitution to govern the affairs of Independent India. The Congress Working Committee reiterated the demand in 1939.

34.3 FORMATION OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

34.3.1 The Cripps Mission

Initially the colonial authorities resisted the demand for creation of a Constitution. But with the change in the circumstances – the outbreak of the World War II and formation of the new Coalition (labour-led) government in Britain – forced the British government to acknowledge the urgency to solve the problem related to Constitution of Indians. In 1942 the British government sent its cabinet member – Sir Stafford Cripps – with the draft declaration on proposals (regarding a constitution for Indians) to be implemented at the end of the World War II provided both the Muslim League and the INC had agreed to accept them. The draft proposals of the Cripps Mission recommended the following: providing the Dominion Status, i.e., equal partnership of the British Commonwealth of Nations; all Provinces and Indian States should constitute one India Union by the British Constitution; the Constitution of India should be framed by an elected Constituent Assembly of the Indian people but if any province (or Indian State) which was not prepared to accept the Constitution was to be free to retain its constitutional position which had existed at that time, such provinces were to be free to enter into separate constitutional arrangements.

Both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League did not accept the proposals of the Cripps Mission. The Muslim League demanded that India should be divided on the communal lines and some provinces should form and independent state of Pakistan, and there should be two Constituent Assemblies, one for Pakistan and another for India.

34.3.2 The Cabinet Mission

The British Indian government made several attempts to bridge the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League. But it was unsuccessful. The British government sent another delegation of the Cabinet members, known as the Cabinet Delegation, which also came to be known as the Cabinet Mission

Plan. It consisted of three cabinet members – Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander. The Cabinet Delegation also failed to bring the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to an agreement. It, however, made its own proposal which was announced simultaneously on 16th May, 1946 in England as well as in India. The Cabinet delegation made the following recommendations: there should a Union of India consisting of British India and the States, which will have jurisdiction over subjects of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Communication; all residuary powers would belong to the Provinces and the States; the Union should have Executive and Legislature consisting of the representatives from the Provinces and the States but for decision relating to a major communal issue in the legislature a majority of representatives of two major communities present, and voting along with the majority of all members present and voting would be required, and; the provinces would be free to form Groups with executives and legislatures, and each group would be free to determine the Provincial Subjects which would be taken up by the Group organisation.

34.3.3 Election to the Constituent Assembly

Meanwhile, According to the proposals of the Cabinet Mission, the election to the Constituent Assembly was held in which members of both the Congress and the Muslim League were returned. The members of the Constituent Assembly were elected by the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. However, differences between the Congress and the Muslim League arose on interpretation of "Group Clauses" of the Cabinet Mission. The British government intervened at this stage and explained to the leaders in London that the contention of the Muslim League was correct. And on December 6, 1946, the British Government published a statement, which for the first time acknowledged the possibility of two Constituent Assemblies and two States. As a result when the Constituent Assembly first met on December 9, 1946, it was boycotted by the Muslim League, and it functioned without the participation of the Muslim League.

34.4 NATURE OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY'S REPRESENTATION

It is often argued that the Constituent Assembly of India did not represent the masses of India because its representatives were not elected through the universal adult franchise. Rather they were indirectly elected by the restricted adult franchise confined to the elite sections of society – the educated and tax payers. According to Austin, reasons for the restricted franchise and indirect election of the Constituent Assembly members were spelled by the Cabinet Mission Plan – to avoid the cumbersome and slow progress in the process of Constitution making. The Cabinet Mission provided for the indirect election to the Constituent Assembly by the elected members of the provincial legislature. Congress agreed to this proposal of the Cabinet Mission forsaking the claim of adult franchise to hold election to the Constituent Assembly. Despite having been elected through the restricted adult franchise, the Constituent Assembly represented different shades of opinions and religious communities of India. Austin observes that though there was a majority of the Congress in the Constituent Assembly, it had an "unwritten and unquestioned belief" that Congress should represent social and ideological diversity. There was also its "deliberate policy" that the

representatives of various minority communities and viewpoints should be represented in the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly consisted of members with different ideological orientations, and three religious communities – Sikhs, Muslims and General (Hindus and all other communities like the Anglo-Indians, Parsis, etc.). In words of K. Santaram "There was hardly any shade of opinion not represented in the Assembly" (see Austin, 2012, p.13, fn.48). Majority of the Constituent Assembly members belonged to the Congress. It also included non-Congress members like A.K. Ayyer and N.G. Ayyanger who were brought by the Congress as "experts"; Dr. Ambedkar and John Matthai, who were also the cabinet ministers; S.P. Mukherjee represented the Hindu Mahasabha. The Constituent Assembly included representatives from the Princely States as well. It needs to be underscored that Dr. Ambedkar was initially elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bengal as member of the Scheduled Caste Federation. But he lost this seat due to the partition of Bengal and was re-elected by the Bombay Congress (as a non-Congress candidate) at the request of the Congress High Command. The Constituent Assembly sought to address concerns of every person irrespective of their social and cultural orientations. Before incorporating a provision in the constitution, it held elaborate deliberations. Thus the members of the Constituent Assembly were able to overcome the limitations of having been elected by the restricted franchise. As we will discuss in this Unit the Constituent Assembly sought to accommodate universal values of democracy. The Constituent Assembly adopted several provisions from different constitutions of world and adapted to the needs of India. In fact, Austin argues that while incorporating different provisions in the Constitution including those which were borrowed from other countries the Constituent Assembly adopted "two wholly Indian concepts" of resolving differences among its members i.e., consensus and accommodation. Even as the concept of accommodation was used to the principles which were included in the Constitution, that of consensus was adopted in the decision making process.

Most of the members of the Constituent Assembly participated in its proceedings. But these were twenty individuals who played the most influential role in the Assembly. Some of them were Prasad, Asad, Patel, Nehru, Pant, Sitaramayya, Ayyar, Ayyangar, Ambedkar and Satyanarayan Sinha. Though the Constituent Assembly was the sole forum where deliberations took place, yet the deliberations took place in coordination of three bodies – the Constituent Assembly, the Congress Party, and the interim government. Some members of the Constituent Assembly were also members of other bodies at the same time. Austin said that "an oligarchy" of four – Nehru, Patel, Prasad and Asad had enjoyed unquestioned honour and prestige in the assembly. They dominated the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly. Some of these were simultaneously in the government, Congress Party and the Constituent Assembly. Prasad was President of Congress before becoming the President of the Constituent Assembly. Nehru and Patel were Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister at the same time. They were part of the inner circles of the committees of the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution Drafting Committee meticulously incorporated in the draft constitution decisions of the Constituent Assembly. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, chairman of the Drafting Committee, played the leading role in drafting of the Constitution. Acknowledging the pivotal role of Ambedkar, T.T. Krishnamachari, a member of the Drafting Committee, said in one of his speeches:

"The House is perhaps aware that out of the seven members nominated by you, one had resigned from the house and was replaced. One had died and was not replaced. One was away in America and his place was not filled up, and another person was engaged in State Affairs, and there was a void to that extent. One or two people were far away from Delhi and perhaps reasons of health did not permit them to attend. So it happened ultimately that the burden of drafting this constitution fell upon Dr. Ambedkar and I have no doubt that we are grateful to him for having achieved this task in a manner which is undoubtedly commendable."

34.5 ROLE OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY 1946-1949

The inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly was held on the 9th December 1946. It was supposed to be attended by all 296 members but only 207 members could attend it because the Muslim League members were absent from it as they had boycotted the Constituent Assembly. In this meeting, J.B. Kripalani requested Dr. Sachchidanand to take the chair as temporary chairman of the House. The members passed a resolution on the 10th December 1946 for election of a permanent member, and on the 11th December 1946, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was elected as the permanent Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. On 13th December 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru moved resolution regarding Aims and Objectives.

The Constituent Assembly divided its work among different committees for its smooth functioning. Some of the important committees were: (a) Union Power Committee. It was chaired by Jawaharlal Nehru and had nine members; (b) Committee on Fundamental Rights and Minorities. It had 54 members and Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel was its chairman; (c) Steering Committee and its 3 members which included Dr. K.M. Munshi (chairman), Gopalaswami Iyangar and Bhagwan Das; (d) Provincial Constitution Committee. It had 25 members with Sardar Patel as its chairman; (e) Committee on Union Constitution. It had 15 members with Jawahalal Nehru as its chairman.

After discussing the reports of these committees, the Assembly appointed a Drafting Committee on 29th August 1947 under the chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The draft was prepared by Sir B.N. Rau, Advisor to the Constituent Assembly. A 7-member Committee was constituted to examine the draft. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who Law Minister as well as chairman of the Drafting, Committee piloted the draft in the Assembly. Dr. Ambedkar presented "Draft Constitution of India" which was an alternative to the proposals given in the reports of the committees; besides it also contained additional resolutions. The "Draft Constitution" was published in February, 1948. It was discussed by the Constituent Assembly clause by clause (this was known as the second reading) in its several sessions and was completed by October 17, 1949. The Constituent Assembly again met on 14th November to discuss the draft further or to give it a third reading. It was finalised on 26th November, 1949 after receiving the signature of the President of the Constituent Assembly. But it was January 26, 1950 which became the date of commencement of the Constitution.

34.6 PHILOSOPHY OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

As is evident from the Preamble of the Constitution given below in sub-section 34.6.1, the philosophy of Indian Constitution is based on the principles of liberal democracy and secularism, with some elements of social democracy. It seeks to protect the rights – justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, of individuals and cultural and religious rights of social and religious communities. It was after a thorough discussion in the Constituent Assembly of the Objective Resolution that the Preamble of the Constitution was adopted. Indeed the deliberations within the Constituent Assembly virtually began with the deliberations of the Objective Resolution. We will discuss below the Objective Resolution and the Preamble.

Objective Resolution and the Preamble of the Constitution

As mentioned earlier, on the 13th December 1946, the fourth day of the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, Jawaharlal Nehru moved the resolution regarding the Aims and Objectives of the Constituent Assembly. This resolution came to be known as the OBJECTIVE RESOLUTION. The Resolution laid down eight points or paragraphs of the Resolution as they were alluded to, as aims and objective. These aims and objectives included:

1) To proclaim India as an Independent Sovereign Republic and to draw up for its future governance a constitution;

2) India would be a Union of the territories consisting of the British India, those covered by the Indian States, and territories which were willing to be constituted into the Independent Sovereign India;

3) The territories in the Union would possess and retain status of autonomous Units, shall have residuary powers, and exercise all powers of government and administration, except those powers and functions as were assigned to or vested in the Union;

4) All powers and Authority of the Sovereign Independent India and its constituent parts and organs were derived from the people;

5) It will guarantee and secure to all people of India Justice, Social, Economic and Political Equality of status, of opportunity and before law; Freedom of thought, expression belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action, subject to law and public morality;

6) It will provide adequate safeguards for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and depressed and other backward classes;

7) It shall maintain integrity of the territory of the Republic and its sovereign rights on land, sea and air according to justice and the law of the civilised nations; and

8) To ensure the rightful and honoured place of this ancient land in the world and make its full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of the mankind.

The debate on the Objective Resolution had specific significance for Dr. Ambedkar. On the resolution he made a "historic speech". When the House met on the 16th December 1946 to discuss the Objective Resolution Dr. M.R. Jayakar

moving an amendment to the Objective Resolution demanded the postponement of the discussion on the resolution, as he wanted the Muslim League and the Indian States to join the debate resulting in creation of "a tense atmosphere in the House". In such a situation Dr. Rajendra Prasad was "unexpectedly" invited on the 17th December 1946 to make his speech. As a result of the impact of his speech the discussion on the resolution was postponed till next session

Preamble

We the People of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic** and to secure to all its citizens:

Justice, Social, Economic and Political;

Liberty of thought, expression belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; **In Our Constituent Assembly** this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **Hereby Adopt, Enact and Give to Ourselves this Constitution.**

34.7 SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Indian Constitution has some salient features. These features give Indian Constitution a distinct identity. It is based on the features of different constitutions of the world. In the words of Dr. Ambedkar, it was prepared "after ransacking all the known Constitutions of the world". The chapter on Fundamental Rights is based on the American Constitution; the Parliamentary System has been adapted from the British Constitution; the Directive Principles of State Policy have been adopted from the constitution of Ireland; the Emergency provisions are based on the Constitution of German Reich and Government of India Act, 1935. But as mentioned earlier, the features which have been borrowed from other Constitutions have been modified in the light of the needs of our country. It is the longest written constitution. At the time of its formation, there were 395 Articles and 8 Schedules. It ensures both Justiciable and Non-Justiciable Rights: Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of the State Policy. We will discuss two of these important features – the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, abandonment of the separate electorate and universal adult franchise.

34.7.1 The Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy

The Fundamental Rights restrict state from encroaching upon the rights of individuals and Directive Policies of the State Policy make it obligatory for the state to introduce measures for carrying out social revolution. They are enshrined in the III and IV Parts respectively of the Constitution. The Fundamental Rights are divided into seven parts in the Indian Constitutions – the Right of Equality, the Right of Freedom, the Right against Exploitation, the Right to Freedom of Religion, Cultural and Educational Rights, the Right to Property, and the Right to Constitutional Remedies. Before their inclusion in the Constitution of India,

the need for providing Fundamental Rights and the state measures for social transformation were emphasised by the Indian National Congress in several resolutions: Annie Basant's draft of the Commonwealth of India Bill, Nehru Report, Karachi resolution, *Sapru Report* of 1945. The *Sapru Report* was of special significance because apart from the Fundamental Rights and Directive Policy of the State Policy, it suggested the provisions for the protection of minority rights. It was also first to make a distinction between the Fundamental Rights as the justiciable and the Directive Policy of the State Policy as the non-justiciable rights.

In the sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly on Fundamental Rights there were no differences in principles on the rights, though there were some on techniques. It suggested that the Fundamental Rights should be made justiciable. The sub-Committee, however, suggested that despite the negative restriction on it in relation to the Fundamental Rights, state could intervene with regard to the social revolution. Amrit Kaur who was supported by Ayyar opposed inclusion to allow free "practice" of religion in the Fundamental Rights because it could include "anti-social" practices such as Devdasi, sati and Purdah. As an impact of this opposition, a provision was made in the Constitution that right to freely practice religion should not prevent the state from making the laws for social welfare and reform. With regard to suggestion of the sub-Committee about the "equality before law", Ayyar opined that it could be discriminatory against the marginalised groups of the society like factory workers, children and women. He suggested that the "equality before law" should be replaced by the clause stating that "no person should be denied equal protection of law". This suggestion was included in the Constitution. The Sub-committee also discussed matters relating to conflict between individual liberty and state responsibility, and protection of minority rights. As a result of this debate the provisions abolishing forced labour and human trafficking, freedom to practice religion, special provisions for the protection of script, culture and right of the minorities to maintain their educational institutions. These found place in the Constitution.

34.7.2 Universal Adult Suffrage and Abolition of the Separate Electorate

After debating its draft list of Fundamental rights the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights did not recommend inclusion of all of them in the section III of the Constitution as the Fundamental Rights. Instead it suggested that these should be incorporated in other places in the Constitution. One such example is that of the Universal suffrage and periodic elections. The sub-Committee agreed unanimously in favour of the Universal suffrage but suggested that it should not be part of the Fundamental Rights. Accordingly, it was placed in the Article 326 of the Part XV on election. The word "universal", however, is missing from the Article 326. But the fact that every adult citizen of the country is entitled to vote makes it practically a universal adult franchise. As mentioned earlier, before Indians got the right to universal adult franchise, the prominent leaders of the Indian National movement strove for the abolition of the separate electorate in favour of the joint electorate. As we know the British sought to continue separate electorate in India since the Morley-Minto reforms 1909 till the Communal Award of 1932 in the Constitution. The Communal Award sought to accord separate electorate for Muslims, Europeans, Sikhs, Indian Christians and Anglo-Indians. It also provided for seats for the Depressed Classes which were to be filled by

election from special constituencies. In such constituencies only depressed classes could vote. In addition the depressed classes were also entitled to vote in general constituencies. Gandhi protested against the recommendation of the notion of separate electorate for the depressed classes. He sat on fast unto death in September 1932. Gandhi's fast evoked opposition from Ambedkar. However, both Gandhi and Ambedkar reached compromise in Poona Pact. According to the Poona Pact, seats were reserved for the depressed classes in the general constituencies. This resulted in the abolition of the separate electorate. The abolition of separate electorate got reflected in the reservation of seats in the legislative bodies Constitution.

34.8 SUMMARY

The making of Indian Constitution largely consisted of two phases – 1857 to 1935 and 1946 to 1949. With the transfer of power from the Company to the British Crown, the British government introduced different elements of governance through different Acts. These also included the elements of representation of Indians in the institutions of governance. The motive of the British to introduce them was to serve their colonial interests rather than to provide democratic rights to them. The provision for communal representation introduced through the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909 and through the Communal Award in 1932 was opposed by the leaders of the Indian National Movement, particularly in case of the Depressed Classes. Gandhi's fast which resulted in the Poona Pact resulted in the abolition of the separate electorate but in giving the reservation to the depressed classes in the provincial legislature. After the Congress emphasised the need for making of a Constitution of India by their own Constituency, the British reluctantly realised the urgency for establishment of the Constituent Assembly of India for Indians in the changed political situation following the Second World War and change of government in Britain. The Constituent Assembly which was set up following the recommendations of the Cabinet Mission Plan was elected through the restricted adult franchise by the provincial assemblies. Despite having been elected by the privileged sections of the society, the Constituent Assembly represented different shades of opinions and ideologies. It also represented different social groups of India. Before reaching any decision the Constituent Assembly discussed all issues thoroughly. The decision and suggestions by different sub-Committees of the Constituent Assembly were finally incorporated in the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India is the document which provided vision for social change. The Constitution is an embodiment of principles of liberal democracy and secularism, with some elements of social democracy. It ensures protection of the rights – justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, of individuals and cultural and religious rights of social and religious communities.

34.9 EXERCISES

1) What were the provisions of the Nehru Report? What were its shortcomings?

2) Discuss the role of the Constituent Assembly in making of the Indian Constitution.

3) Describe the important provisions of the Indian Constitution.

UNIT 35 LEGACIES OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT*

Structure

35.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the last Unit of the course. The purpose of this Unit is to provide an overview of the entire course. In particular it discusses the legacies of the national movement, and picks up those strands of the movement that have some relevance for independent India. In a way it tries to provide an answer to the question: what is living and what is dead about the Indian national movement? Or, rather, what ended in 1947 and what has continued since then? It is quite clear that agitations against British imperialism ended in 1947 with the attainment of freedom. But some traits and practices developed during the course of the movement continued to cast their shadow on the course of the development of Indian society after 1947. The Unit on legacies is essentially an attempt to take stock of such traits and practices.

35.2 UNIQUENESS OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Seen in a global context, the place of the Indian national movement in Indian history is broadly comparable to the place of French Revolution in the history of Europe and the Russian Revolution in Russian history. The Indian National Movement represented the largest possible consensus, particularly after 1920, when it came under Gandhi's leadership. The consensus enabled the legacy of the movement to endure and survive. The consensus generated during the national movement was not an inheritance; it did not already exist prior to the movement as a kind of an *a priori* reality. The consensus was created by the movement during its own life. This consensus rested on two pillars:

- Anti-imperialism
- A conception of national unity

---

* Resource Person: Prof. Salil Misra

All those individuals and organisations that believed in, and practised, these two ideas could be considered to be a part of the national consensus, generated by the national movement. This creation of a minimum baseline criterion enabled the movement to create an 'umbrella consensus'. This in effect implied that all categories of Indians except **loyalists** (those who remained loyal to the British and were a part of the support system built by British imperialism) and communalists (who did not share the idea of national unity and worked instead for the creation of standardised and homogenised religious-political communities) were a part of this consensus. This consensus was truly like a spectrum and a whole range of political strands were accommodated within it. Political trends as far apart from each other as the Revolutionaries, Communists, Socialists, Left-wingers within Congress, Right-wingers within Congress, Centralists, Constitutionalists, and Liberals, among others, could all retain their differences and yet be a part of the umbrella consensus. They were not required to abandon their basic political orientation in order to join the national movement. This consensus enabled the movement to retain considerable internal diversity yet maintain an over-all unity.

This plurality was an important uniqueness of the national movement. Apart from providing diversity to the nationalist struggle, it also enabled the movement to make smooth transition from a struggle to State power in 1947.

35.3 LEGACIES

The Indian National Movement left a rich legacy for independent India. But legacies do not naturally last forever. They do not have a self-sustaining capacity. They have got to be consciously nurtured and sustained with effort. For independent India this legacy was something like 'ancestral wealth'; it could either be nurtured or thrown away.

So what is the legacy of the national movement which needs to be nurtured and remembered? There are in fact six crucial components of this legacy.

35.3.1 Making of the Indian Nation

The Indian nationalism that evolved since the second half of the 19th century was a variant of the generic global phenomenon called nationalism. But it also evolved some distinctive features of its own. In a nutshell, it was territorial (as against ethnic), civic (as against religious), plural (as against mono-cultural) and remarkably non-coercive. It tried to evolve national unity without seeking to impose it from the top. Its main tendency was homogenizing (as all nationalisms inevitably are) but without being unduly coercive. As mentioned above, anti-imperialism and national unity were the two major pillars that sustained the edifice of Indian nationalism.

This Indian nation was made essentially by the national movement and constitutes its major legacy. It is important to remember that a nation of Indian people did not already exist; it had to be created. The task of the national movement was not just to represent the Indian nation but also to create it. This was important because some of the British scholars, ethnographers and other commentators had virtually ruled out the possibility of nationhood for India. They did not look upon the Indian people as capable of evolving a common nationality. The 19th century

Indian nationalist response to this was to assert that the Indian people were a "nation-in-making". This concept (articulated for the first time by the leading moderate leader Surendranath Bannerjea) consisted of a recognition in the 19th century that the people of India, divided into regions, languages, castes and religions, were not a nation but they were on their way to acquiring a common nationhood. They were not *inherently* incapable of acquiring nationhood and their internal diversities, of caste, language, religion and region, were not a major hindrance in their journey towards nationhood.

When India became free in 1947, anti-imperialism - one of the two pillars of Indian nationalism – ceased to have any operative significance and was no longer a major constitutive element of Indian nationalism. What would now be the essential character of Indian nationalism? This was an important question and Nehru, independent India's first prime minister, gave considerable thought to it. According to him, the Indian nation was to be based on economic development and an "emotional integration" of the people. Nehru understood that modern economic development, in a large and plural country like India, was bound to lead to initial disparities and displacements. It was not possible for Indian society to make its transition to industrial affluence without going through the pain and trauma of displacements. Such a situation could easily create social turmoil and tear apart the entire fabric of society. It was hoped that Indian nationalism would be able to neutralize these potential ill-effects inherent in the transition to industrialism. To put it differently, modern industrial development would rock the boat of Indian society; nationalism would help stabilize it. In one of his speeches, Nehru warned his audiences in a public meeting in 1957: "We are all in one boat, we have to go forward together. If some people begin to jump about in it, then the boat will not go forward but it will surely capsize."

It is difficult to tell how the Indian nation has performed this role in independent India. It is however true that the Indian society in the 1950s was largely marked by a political consensus and social harmony, necessary pre-conditions to economic growth. But the subsequent decades witnessed considerable turbulence and erosion of harmony. There was also a questioning of the legitimacy of the Indian nation from certain quarters. The globalisation of Indian economy and rapid social changes since the 1990s have created new challenges for Indian nationalism. Only time will tell how the Indian nation will cope with the new challenges. As of now, it is important to recognise that this process of nation-in-making is an ongoing process. Both types of forces – those for and against this process – exist in the society. Certain trends are accelerating this process, but certain other trends are also leading to a disruption of this process. There is however no doubt that Indian nationalism constitutes one of the important legacies of the national movement and has an important role to play in the future of Indian society.

35.3.2 Mass Participation in Politics

Democratisation of Indian politics and mass participation in politics was extremely important features of the national movement. The democratisation took the form of popular participation in the struggles conducted during the course of the movement. Indian democracy is not a gift of the British; it is a product of nationalist struggle for independence. During its life the trajectory of the national movement was like a constantly upward expanding spiral. Each phase of the struggle – from Swadeshi movement to Quit India – brought different segments

– urban population, peasants, workers, students, women, tribals – within the orbit of the national movement. Those groups that joined brought their own momentum and energies to the movement. Popular participation democratised and energized the struggle. A whole range of extremely innovative ways were devised by the ordinary people to carry forward their national movement.

Congress, the leading organisation of the struggle, started the tradition of taking the major decisions after due deliberations and in a democratic manner. Many of the major decisions taken by Congress, for instance launching of the non-cooperation movement in 1920, acceptance of office by Congress in provinces in 1937, and launching of Quit India, were taken after a great deal of debate and discussion. Often the differences within Congress were so serious that they threatened to split the organisation. Congress came quite close to a split with serious differences developing between pro-changers and no-changers after 1922, on the question of entering the legislatures. The split was eventually avoided by the formation of Swaraj party *within* Congress in 1923. Likewise serious differences developed between the Left-wing of Congress, represented by Nehru and Subhas Bose, and the Right-wing represented by Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari, in the 1930s. But these differences were also resolved through debate, discussions and mutual compromises. This could be possible only because of a democratic functioning of the Congress and of the national movement.

After 1947, the Indian constitution adopted the model of parliamentary democracy based on universal adult franchise. The adoption of universal adult franchise came in for quite a bit of scrutiny particularly by some foreign observers. They obviously felt that the low level of literacy in India was not very conducive to opening the society for a full democracy. But the leaders of the national movement thought otherwise. Their contention was that if the illiterate masses of India could participate actively in the national movement, they were mature enough to take independent political decisions and elect their own government. The leaders' faith in the people was obviously rooted in their experience of the national movement and in the practices developed during the national movement. As a result of adopting universal adult franchise, Indian society experienced in 1952 the largest general election in the history of the world. Since then successful elections at the Centre and in states, change of government and the defeat of the ruling parties have become the essential features of Indian politics.

It has to be emphasised that the democratisation of the political structure is easily the biggest achievement of independent India. The main reason why Indian society (with low literacy rate, precarious economic development, and persistent presence of many authoritarian traditions in the society) has successfully adapted to democracy is largely because of the practices evolved during the course of the national movement. It was during the course of the nationalist struggle that the people of India internalised the democratic values and incorporated them in their political behaviour. The Indian democracy today is flourishing and vibrant, though far from perfect. During the last six decades, it has grown and expanded its base considerably. Interestingly, the trajectory it has followed is very similar to that followed during the course of the nationalist struggle. Various groups of Indian people joined the struggle not at one go but in stages. The movement, at the beginning of the 20th century represented at best the middle class urban men, confined to certain pockets of the country. But soon it broke out of the elite fold and began to incorporate students, religious minorities, peasants, women, workers

and tribals in its fold. This is broadly how Indian democracy has proceeded in independent India. Various political and social groups joined Indian democracy in phases and thus enriched it. The major political conflicts in independent India have been conducted *within* the democratic framework, not *about* it. The Indian democracy has also provided enough confidence to its marginalized people – women, tribals, Dalits, Muslims – to launch their specific struggles on their own, without seeking any outside mediation, and by making use of the democratic option. Indian democracy has also worked towards a resolution of conflicts and has enabled the society as a whole to throw up some areas of consensus, though often in a messy, loose and incoherent kind of way.

35.3.3 Promotion of Civil Liberties

Tremendous focus on civil liberties is another major legacy of the national movement. From the very beginning the leaders of the national movement showed concern for civil liberties, namely freedom of the press, speech and association. The freedom of press was very central to early nationalist leadership, because their main political activities were conducted primarily through the press. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was probably the first Indian leader who looked upon education as a basic human right. Although he had always argued against heavy taxation levied by the British, but he was willing to support the existing taxes if British took the responsibility for compulsory primary education. S.N. Banerjea was the first nationalist leader to go to jail for criticizing the British through his journalistic writings. Later under Gandhi's leadership, courting arrest voluntarily became a major political activity of the national movement, when thousands of people offered to go to jail.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Lokmanya Tilak began demanding adult franchise, even though it did not exist in Britain till 1928. As part of their commitment to human rights, the Indian leadership, led by Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru, prepared a national constitution in 1928. Generally known as Nehru Report, it recommended the declaration of fundamental rights, a parliamentary system of government, adult franchise and an independent judiciary. Even though the Nehru Report was rejected by the British, it firmly put on the ledger the uncompromising commitment of the national movement to issues of civil liberties and human rights. In 1936, at the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Civil Liberties Union (ICLU) was formed along non-party lines for the promotion of civil liberties. Its first circular, drafted by Nehru, stated: "It is proposed to start an Indian Civil Liberties Union, the sole function of which will be the protection of civil liberties in all departments of national activities…. The first object of this Union would be to collect data and give publicity to it. Other activities, such as the organization of public opinion to resist all encroachment on civil liberties would follow." The ICLU was the precursor to the main civil liberty and human rights organizations that developed in independent India.

But it was Gandhi, above all, who provided the clearest and sharpest outline of what should constitute a human right. In 1922, he wrote in his weekly *Young India*: "We must first make good the right of free speech and free association. We must defend these elementary rights with our lives." His definition of these rights was: "Liberty of speech means that it is un-assailed even when the speech hurts; liberty of the press can be said to be truly respected when the press can comment in the severest terms upon and even misrepresent matters. Freedom of

association is truly respected when assemblies of people can discuss even revolutionary projects."

It should thus be clear that the Indian national movement provided a robust human rights framework to be pursued in independent India. However, the fate of human rights in independent India has not remained consistent and at the same level throughout the period. There have been times when the society as a whole has suffered from a deficit of human rights and liberties either because of a tilt of the State and its institutions towards authoritarianism, or because of intolerance displayed by one section of society towards other members. Even so, it has to be said that in comparison with many other societies, India certainly enjoys a healthy respect for civil and human rights of the people. There is no doubt that the human rights perspective, in howsoever a limited measure, practised by the Indian society, is an inheritance from the dominant practices developed during the course of the national movement.

35.3.4 Economic Development based on Modern Science and Technology

Almost from the very beginning of the national movement, the leadership developed a vision of a future India as a modern industrial society and economy. The economy was to be based on industrialism making full use of modern science and technology, as had happened in Europe. In fact, their blueprint of India of the future was that of a country which would resemble a European country. As this vision developed in the 20th century, it assigned a central role to the State in leading India's transformation to an affluent industrial society. This vision was codified in the famous Congress resolution on fundamental rights and economic programme, passed at its Karachi session in 1931. The resolution clearly stated: "The State shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport." There was a substantial consensus within Congress that Independent India would strive to become a modern democratic industrial society.

However it is important to emphasize that whereas this was the dominant vision of the future, it was not the only one. At any rate there existed at different points in time two rival perspectives on the future economic development of India, which competed with the mainstream view. First was the vision of a socialist economic development as against a capitalist one. This perspective developed in the 1930s and was led by Nehru and other Left-wing leaders within Congress. According to this perspective, India was to develop as a modern industrial society, but without a dominant role by the capitalist class. The economic policies would be formulated keeping in mind the interests of the large majority of peasants and workers and the excessive concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of the few would be discouraged. Nehru posited capitalism and socialism as two choices before the country and clearly opted for socialism. In 1933 he declared that "capitalism means the developed system of production for profit based on private ownership of means of production." Socialism, on the other hand, meant "the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative system." Socialism meant above all the "nationalization of the instrument of production and distribution." However, this view of India's economic development was held only by some people. Many others in the leadership advocated the development

of India as a modern capitalist society. The consensus that emerged was precisely on those aspects of modern economic development that were in common to both the perspectives, namely, modern industrial development based on science and technology and an important role for the State in promoting key sectors of the economy. This consensus was fully reflected in the formation of a National Planning Committee in 1938 under the chairmanship of Nehru. The Planning Committee was a precursor to the National Planning Commission that was set up in 1950 with the prime minister as its chairman.

The other important perspective was held by Gandhi and some of his followers in the national movement. This perspective was based on decentralisation of resources, minimal use of modern technology, autonomy for the villages and the creation of rural industries. This view was articulated by Gandhi who often showed his reservations for modern economic development based on science and technology and did not share the thinking of the mainstream Congress leadership on the future economic policy. However, it has to be said that he did not at any point confront the mainstream view and certainly did not insist on an inclusion of his economic views into the mainstream economic policy of the national movement. It is necessary to point out here that the famous Karachi resolution on fundamental rights and economic programme, mentioned above, was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, presided over by Sardar Patel, and moved in the open session by none other than Gandhi himself!

This mainstream view on economic development constituted an important legacy of the national movement for the economic development of independent India. Having critiqued the industrial revolution earlier in 1930s, Nehru recognised its importance and said in a speech to university students in 1958: "The greatest revolution in the world has in fact been not the French Revolution or the American or Chinese or the Russian Revolution but the Industrial Revolution, the electric revolution and the atomic revolution because they are changing the entire pattern of our lives." It was along these lines that the Indian revolution had to be built.

35.3.5 Secularism

The Indian national movement was organised along secular lines and remained fully committed to secularism till the very end. However this commitment to secularism took different forms. Congress at its Allahabad session in 1887, resolved that it would not take up any question pertaining to religious communities if the majority of that community was opposed to that issue being taken up. Through their articulations, pronouncements and activities, the leaders of the national movement promoted the ideas of separation of religion from politics and State, treatment of religion as a private matter for the individual, symmetrical treatment by the State towards all religions and religious communities, no discrimination on the basis of religion, and active opposition to communalism. All these ideas were pushed ahead in different forms and in different ways at different points in time. The famous Karachi resolution of 1931, for instance, declared that in free India "every citizen shall enjoy freedom of consciousness and the right freely to profess and practise his religion" and that all citizens would be "equal before the law, irrespective of caste, creed or sex in regard to public employment, office of power or honour" and that "the State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions." The Karachi resolution was to remain the linchpin of the basic normative orientation of the national movement towards the major political and economic questions of the day.

However there was a slight difference in the manner in which Gandhi and Nehru, two important leaders of the movement, approached the question of secularism. Though deeply committed to it, they articulated their commitments differently. Gandhi often defined his political commitment in religious terms, because he saw Religion primarily as a source of morality. He was a deeply religious person and he had no hesitation in extending his religious affiliation to all religions, since he saw morality at the base of all religions. In his writings, Gandhi made a conceptual distinction between 'Religion' (written with a capital 'R') and 'religions' (in plural, written with a small 'r' used denominationally for different religions). He then declared: "Religion is one. But religions are many." Religion for him stood for a moral order, which was common to all religions. Gandhi highlighted this distinction of 'one and many' in another way. He argued that 'Religion' was the root of the tree and 'religions' were different branches of the same tree. With such an understanding of Religion, Gandhi openly said that his politics was derived from Religion (i.e., morality). He had no hesitation in openly declaring that for him Religion and politics were not separate but connected to each other. However, in the 1930s Gandhi experienced that a combination of religion and politics produced communalism. He then started arguing in 1940s that "Religion is a private matter which should have no place in politics." He emphasised again in 1947: "Religion is a personal affair of each individual. It must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs." Gandhi's views on religion and secularism should therefore not be seen as contradictory. There is deeper unity and consistency between his total commitment to Religion and also to secularism.

Jawaharlal Nehru approached this question in a different manner. Deeply disturbed by the emergence of communal politics in the 1920s Nehru saw religion as a problem and implicated in the politics of communalism. He equated religion with superstition, irrationalism and intolerance. He therefore felt that a genuine secular polity could be established only if the influence of religion in society was kept to the minimum. In a letter, written in 1926, Nehru argued that the only solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem was to "scotch our so called religion.... How long that will take I cannot say but religion in India will kill that country and its people if not subdued." At this stage Nehru's understanding of secularism was based on a separation of religion and politics and did not allow for any role for religion in social and political life.

However it is interesting that just as Gandhi in 1940s came close to Nehru's position, Nehru also came quite close to Gandhi's basic position on this question. From total opposition to religion in 1920s, Nehru developed a more complex and nuanced position on religion and its role in social life, particularly after 1947. On the one hand, Nehru looked at religion as "blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation and the preservation of vested interests." But, on the other hand, it was also a moral force "which supplied a deep inner craving of human beings ...[and] which has brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls." Nehru was very conscious that any attempt to withdraw religion from social life might create a moral vacuum for people.

With this convergence and synergy of ideas between Gandhi and Nehru, the dominant conception of secularism that developed in independent India was neither anti-religion nor was it based on a denial of religion in social life. It was rather based on an opposition to communalism and to any discrimination on the

basis of religion. There is no doubt that this dominant model of Indian secularism derives entirely from the ideas and practices evolved during the course of the national movement, and constitutes its significant legacy.

35.3.6 Independent Foreign Policy

It is not very usual for anti imperialist struggles to have a foreign policy of their own. Foreign policies are normally the preserve of sovereign state systems and not of movements struggling for sovereignty. However the Indian national movement was quite distinctive in this respect in that it showed a tremendous concern with the question of a foreign policy. It evolved an internationalist framework of policy during the course of the movement, which served to provide the blueprint for the foreign policy practised by the State in independent India.

Almost from the very beginning, the Congress leaders refused to accept the British position on major international issues and developed an independent perspective of their own. From the Congress platform, they made a critique of the British policy of annexation and conquests abroad. When the British annexed upper Burma (present-day Myanmar) and made it a part of British India, the Congress leaders opposed it. Their opposition was only partly based on the heavy cost of all such conquests, which had to be met from Indian resources. It also emanated out of a respect for the territorial integrity of another country.

At the beginning of the 20th century these critiques culminated in a concrete policy of opposition to interference by one country in another. When the British tried to interfere in the affairs of Persia and Turkey, the Congress leaders voiced their opposition to it. They were particularly agitated on the fate of Turkey because the Caliph, the Sultan of Turkey, was also considered the spiritual leader of Muslims all over the world. At its 1912 session, the Congress president expressed the "profound sorrow and sympathy" felt by all the non-Muslim Indians for their Muslim brethren for the misfortunes of the Caliphate. Later, at the end of the First World War, Gandhi actually led the Khilafat movement in support of the Khalifa. The movement was fought for a restoration of the power and prestige of the Khalifa of Turkey, which had been promised by the British during the War, and denied subsequently.

Once the national movement came under the active leadership of Gandhi, with Jawaharlal Nehru as his deputy, it acquired truly global dimensions. The new perspective was based on a championship of the twin values of freedom and peace *everywhere*, and for every country. Indian independence was seen as an important component of this project of world peace. It was actually in 1921 that Congress stated its own independent foreign policy. Delinking itself from the foreign policy of the British, Congress highlighted peace, freedom and global cooperation as the necessary building blocks in its foreign policy. This was perhaps the first example of a colony, under imperialist domination, declaring its own independent foreign policy. Gandhi declared: "While we are making our plans for Swaraj, we are bound to consider and define our foreign policy. Surely we are bound authoritatively to tell the world what relations we wish to cultivate with it."

Once Congress dissociated itself from the British foreign policy, it began to support freedom struggles by other Asian countries against European imperialism. It expressed solidarity with the struggles of Arabs, Egypt, Burma, Sri Lanka and

China. Gandhi began to talk of an Asian Federation, committed to freedom and peace. Nehru attended the International Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels in 1927. This really internationalised the Indian struggle for freedom. India and China came close together for the first time. The national movement now began to openly express solidarity with all the struggles against Western imperialism. At Nehru's initiative, Congress affiliated itself with the League against Imperialism set up at Brussels. Congress now declared from its platform that the Indian struggle was part of a great world struggle against the very system of Imperialism. In the same year, 1927, Nehru visited the Soviet Union on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and was very impressed with the transformation in the social conditions in a short span of time. The British foreign policy in India had been largely shaped by a kind of Russo-phobia. Nehru demolished this myth and provided a new vantage point from where the Soviet Russia appeared more like an ally rather than an aggressor. It was also at Brussels that Nehru became aware of the problems of Latin Americans, groaning under the weight of American imperialism, through his contacts with the Latin American delegates. Later, in the 1930s and 40s, the Indian national movement took a stand on Spanish Civil War, expressed solidarity with the Chinese people in their struggle against Japanese aggression and declared its firm, uncompromising opposition to Fascism.

The sum total of the foreign policy as practiced by the national movement was a combined commitment both to Indian nationalism and internationalism. Nehru took the lead in this but he was supported by Gandhi and other leaders of the movement. Nehru realised that the British imperialism could not be defeated till Imperialism as a whole was dismantled. It was in this sense that each colony of Asia and Africa needed to fight against its imperialist power but also fight collectively against Imperialism as a system. The two struggles, the nationalist and the global, needed to complement each other in order for both to be successful.

It was also during this period that Gandhi developed the practice of making appeals to the people of other countries. He wrote letters to 'every Briton', 'every Japanese' and also to 'American friends'. He chided the people of Japan for Japanese aggression in China. In sheer desperation, Gandhi even wrote a letter to Hitler, imploring him to prevent the War "which may reduce humanity to a savage state."

This was the major legacy of the national movement to the leaders of independent India. There is no doubt that the edifice of a foreign policy in independent India was based on the foundations laid during the national movement. When India became independent in 1947, some of its foreign policy priorities, both immediate and long-term, were: i) end of colonialism and the prevention of its re-emergence in some other form; ii) defining its political and strategic worldview in the new conflict between the Western allies led by the USA and the Socialist group led by the USSR; and iii) what relations to adopt vis-a-vis the neighbouring countries, particularly China and Pakistan. In formulating independent India's response to these questions, the Indian government went by the policy standards that had been set during the course of the national movement. It has to be said that in spite of setbacks (e.g., the China War in 1962), the foreign policy framework evolved in independent India has stood the test of time and owes in no small measure to the practices and the perspective adopted by the Indian national movement.

35.4   WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS

After making a positive appraisal of the Indian National Movement and its relevance for independent India, it is perhaps necessary to point out certain areas of weakness and shortcomings that accompanied the movement. It is generally said that a people get the nation they deserve, and vice-versa. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of the Indian national movement. Because the movement was truly representative of Indian society and people, it also carried their strengths and weaknesses within its fold. So, even as the movement initiated a transformation of the Indian society in a modern direction, it was also transformed by the society. This dialogical relationship between the movement and the society had one great advantage that the movement remained firmly rooted to the Indian soil. But it also carried a disadvantage. It curtailed the capacity of the movement to carry out a rapid and radical transformation of the Indian social structure in a modern direction. As a result the society that emerged after 1947, contained not just the positive features of the Indian tradition, but also some of its negative features (such as hierarchy, patriarchy, caste prejudices, among others). It is indeed strange that the truly representative capacity of the movement, which strengthened it, also limited its transformative potentials.

At the local level, the national movement was not carried out by doctrinally trained political cadre but by ordinary men and women. Also the channels of control at the top were held rather loosely. Considerable autonomy was exercised by the participants of the movement at various levels. This lack of strict control from the top, along with multiple diversities that existed in the movement as well as in the society, meant that the movement as a whole was never completely free from centrifugal pressures and fissiparous tendencies. It was also clear that if these tendencies developed and grew stronger, the leadership of the movement would find it very difficult to handle these pressures successfully. The development of such political tendencies and the inability of the Congress leadership to successfully counter it actually resulted in the partition of the country and the national unity being compromised. However it has to be added that in order to be free from both the possible shortcomings (incapacity for radical transformation and the inability to force national unity), the national movement would have had to be structured along very different lines. As it happens both the weaknesses of the national movement have also carried to the very fabric of society in independent India.

35.5   SUMMARY

In this, the final Unit of the course, the following points were highlighted:

*   The Indian national movement represented an extremely large consensus of the Indian people against British imperialism. Although elements of anti-imperialism existed among sections of the population prior to the movement, it was really transformed into a national and nationalist force during the course of the movement. The movement was based on the twin ideas of anti-imperialism and national unity. It was organised like a platform and anyone who believed in these two ideas could become a part of this consensus.

*   The movement practised and upheld the version of Indian nation that was territorial, civil and non-coercive. These features set the benchmarks for the direction in which the Indian nation was to grow after 1947.

- The mass participation in politics and a programmatic commitment to secularism made sure that both democracy and secularism developed as the major ideas and ideals in independent India.

- The national movement paid special attention to the question of civil liberties and also developed an independent foreign policy framework.

- However, an incapacity for a radical social transformation and an inability to effectively deal with centrifugal and fissiparous forces were two notable weaknesses of the national movement. These weaknesses too appear to have carried into the body politic of independent India. It can therefore be concluded that society and politics in independent India may be considered to have lived under the shadows of the national movement.

35.6 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the role played by the Indian nationalist movement in emphasising the principles of democracy and secularism in independent India.

2) Do you think that the nationalist movement was responsible for evolving a policy framework for economic development in independent India?

3) Analyse the weaknesses and limitations of the legacies of the nationalist movement in India.

SELECTED READINGS

B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics*, New Delhi, 1985.

Bhagwan Josh, *Struggle for Hegemony in India, Vol.II, The Colonial State, the Left and the National Movement, 1934-41*, New Delhi, 1992.

Bipan Chandra, *Ideology and Politics in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1994.

Bipan Chandra, *Indian National Movement: The Long-Term Dynamics*, New Delhi, 2008.

Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Hyderabad, 1979.

Bipan Chandra, et al, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947*, New Delhi, Penguin Books, 1988.

C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainright (eds.), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives, 1935-47*, London, 1970.

D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity*, *1929-42*, Cambridge, 1997.

D.D. Basu, *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, 1960, (2011 20th Edition Reprint)

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 13, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1994,

Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*, New Delhi, 2000.

Granvile Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1966 (2012, seventeenth Indian edition).

Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization*, New Delhi, 1993.

Rajmohan Gandhi, *The Good Boatman: A Portrait of Gandhi*, New Delhi, 1995.

S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru,* Vol. 6, New Delhi, 1974.

S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, *Vol. I, 1889-1947*, Delhi. 1976.

S.K. Chaube, *The Making and Working of the Indian Constitution*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2009

Salil Misra, *A Narrative of Communal Politics, Uttar Pradesh, 1937-39*, New Delhi, 2001.

Sumit Sarkar, *A Critique of Colonial India*, New Delhi.

Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1983.