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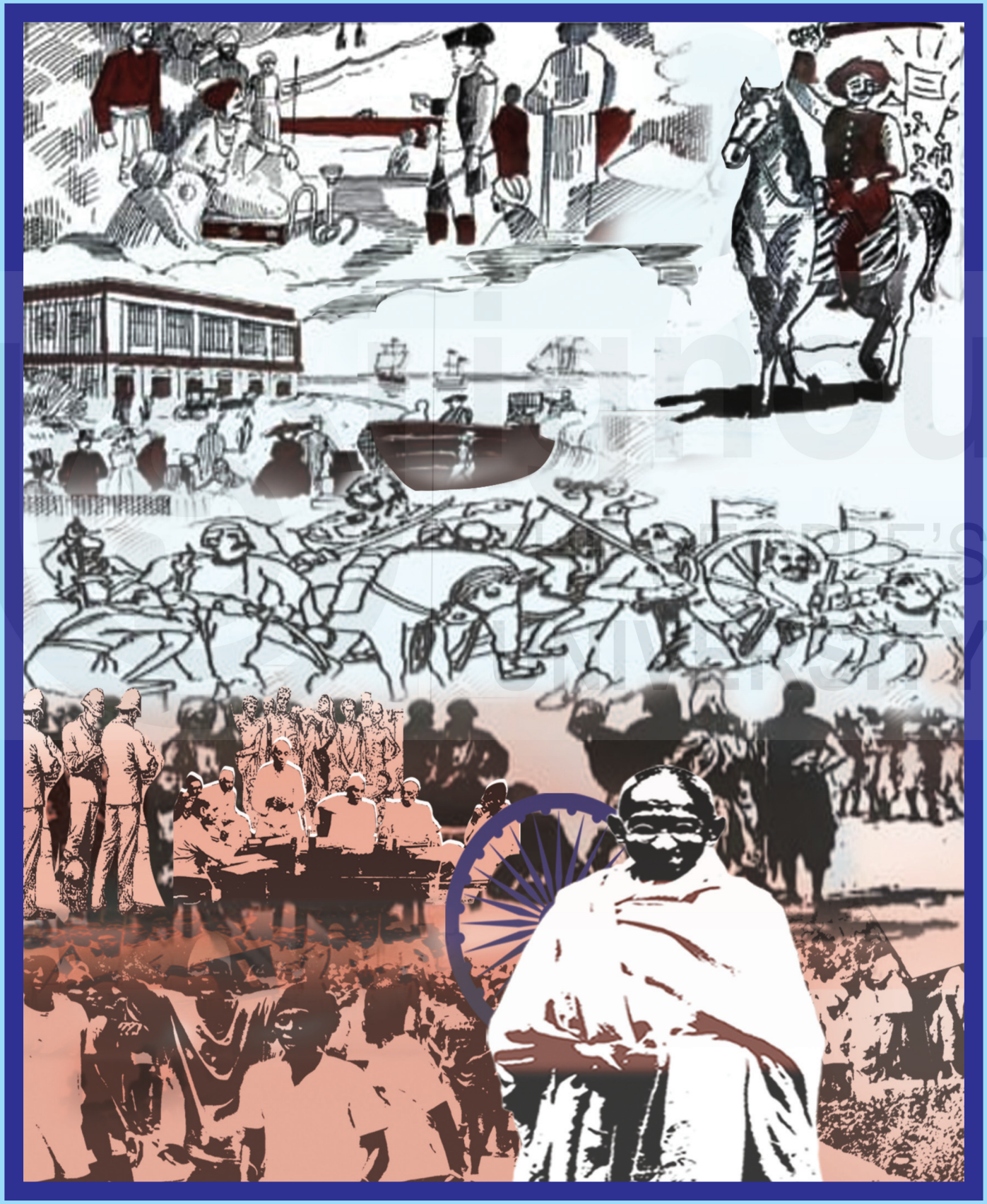
HISTORY OF INDIA : 1707-1950



''शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्तमान विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।''

– इन्दिरा गांधी

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"Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances."

– Indira Gandhi

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HISTORY OF INDIA: 1707-1950

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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Course Credits

Unit 1	Adopted from Unit 1 of EHI-05 and Unit 25 of MHI-05.
Unit 2	Adopted from Units 4 and 5 of EHI-05.
Unit 3	Adopted from Unit 8 of EHI-05.
Unit 4	Adopted from Unit 13 of EHI-05.
Unit 5	Adopted from Units 30 and 31of EHI-05.
Unit 6	Adopted from Unit 16 of EHI-05.
Unit 7	Adopted from Unit 14 of EHI-05.
Unit 8	Adopted from Units 1 and 2 of EHI-01.
Unit 9	Adopted from Unit 8 of EHI-01 and Units 26 and 27 of EHI-05.
Unit 10	Adopted from Units 9, 10, and 11 of EHI-01.
Unit 11	Adopted from Units 16, 18, 25 and 34 of EHI-01.
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Unit 13	Adopted from Unit 35 of EHI-01, Unit 27 of MHI-04, and Unit 34 of MHI-09.

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COURSE STRUCTURE

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course will give an overview of Indian history in the modern period. After the decline of the Mughal Empire, many independent states arose in India which resulted in unending rivalries for territory and revenue. The various European companies became involved in this political and military game for acquiring ever larger control. Finally, the English East India Company not only eliminated the competition from its European rivals but also gained ground at the expense of Indian rulers. It securely established its power by defeating the ruler of the large province of Bengal in 1757. After that it steadily increased its political and military control over almost the whole of India. Its power was challenged in a big way during the Revolt of 1857, but it managed to regain its control after a bitter conflict. This course also deals with the establishment of a colonial economy in a broad framework. The colonial power was again effectively challenged by the rising nationalist movement since the late nineteenth century. The great nationalist movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi finally achieved freedom from colonial rule in 1947. This course deals with the rise and development of this movement and the formation of a new republic.

The course begins with the eighteenth century which is interpreted by the historians from two angles, one set of historians, following an empire-centric approach; argue that the decline of the Mughal Empire was catastrophic resulting in 'chaos and anarchy'. The other set of historians, who have followed a region-centric approach, emphasize that though the empire declined, this did not result in 'chaos and anarchy'. So, the **Unit 1** deals with the chief features of eighteenth century, views of different historians on the eighteenth century, and new ideas about the decline of Mughal Empire and the rise of new states. **Unit 2** is about the emergence of independent regional powers after the decline of Mughal power. More specifically since it was impossible to study all the independent states, therefore, as a kind of case study, the Unit focuses on the process in which the political formation of Mysore and Hyderabad evolved in the 18th century, compares them and in addition also demonstrates the process through which the Sikh state emerged. **Unit 3** is about the emergence of East India Company as the ruling territorial power in Bengal. The role of economic interests is stressed in this traditional political narrative. It took a prolonged struggle for territorial expansion and political consolidation of the British. British fought a number of wars to subdue the local rulers. Internal weaknesses of the Indian states decided the final outcome of this struggle for power. However, it is not our aim to give a detailed chronicle, step by step of the piecemeal conquest of India by the British. Instead of a political narration, our focus in **Unit 4** would be on emerging imperial ideologies and traditions that helped in shaping the attempt to consolidate and systematize British rule in India. You are aware that during the period of its rule over the country the East India Company exploited and harassed the Indian people. Although various sections of Indian people defied the English supremacy at different times, it was the great uprising of 1857, sometimes also termed as the First War of Independence, which posed a serious challenge to the English supremacy at an all India level. So, the

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subject matter of **Unit 5** is the Great Uprising of 1857, its causes, trajectory, and impact. **Unit 6** and **7** highlight the economic dimension of colonial rule. We all know that the drive to collect large revenue and use India's resources for its own profit was central to British Policy. These Units are designed to give a broad picture of colonial economy in both the agricultural sector and in the field of trade and industry.

Unit 8 is a kind of overview of impact of colonial rule on India, changes in the nature of exploitation with changing nature of colonialism and nationalist critique of colonial economy. India in the 19th century witnessed a series of reform movements undertaken in various parts of the country. These movements were oriented toward a re-structuring of the Indian society along modern lines. **Unit 9** presents a general and analytical view of these socio-religious reform movements. It also highlights the significance of these movements. **Unit 10** is about the initial flowering of national consciousness, and explains the way Indian middle class responded to the challenge of colonial rule. This Unit will assess how the national consciousness took an organized form especially to understand the role played by the educated Indians in the formation of Congress. It will also familiarize you with some of the controversies surrounding its origin. It will describe the character of the early Congress. It will introduce you to the emergence of two diverse viewpoints i.e. moderates and extremists in the Congress in this early period. Mahatma Gandhi played a key role in transforming the content, ideology and range of Indian politics during the National Movement. With his entry into politics there opened a new phase of struggle. With the shift to mass mobilisation, he remained the dominant personality during the National Movement and played a crucial role in directing the struggle against British imperialism. So the **Unit 11** explores a series of movements like Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement under the influence of Gandhi's ideas and techniques. One of the major priorities of any developing country is to maintain a unity of its people. In the history of modern India, such a unity was put to a severe test by the growing communalism. **Unit 12** analyses how communalism in India was born and thrived because of a combination of various forces and their development and how it finally culminated in the Partition of the country in 1947. For decades Indian nationalists had resisted the British colonial power and tried to counter its hegemony. After The World War-II and Quit India movement, it was becoming clear that British rule is going to end soon. But it took a prolonged and negotiated settlement for transfer of power to Indian people. The last **Unit 13** of this course deals with the coming of freedom, the role of constituent assembly in the establishment a republic and an analysis of Post-Independent polity of India.

UNIT 1 INTERPRETING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- Understand the salient features of the eighteenth century,
- Understand the different perspectives on the eighteenth century debate,
- Understand why the eighteenth century is regarded as a long century, and
- Understand the reasons behind the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the regional polities.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

For the people of India, the eighteenth century appeared as an age of dissolving certainties. Never in its history had the Mughal Empire appeared so vulnerable. Its citadels were being buffeted by Afghan marauders (Nadir Shah, 1739 and Ahmad Shah Abdali, 1748-1767), Maratha adventurers (the Peshwas) and various warrior-peasant groups (Jats, Rohillas, and the Sikhs), while its military-bureaucratic apparatus (the mansabdari system), which had been its pride and mainstay stood by helplessly. The fiscal system had also broken down, thereby threatening the life-styles of a genteel, highly urbane class of people and their dependants. The empire was bankrupt and all semblances of political governance and fiscal probity had apparently disappeared and this was not all. The worst possible ignominies had been heaped on the house of Timur: two emperors, Ahmad Shah (1748-1754) and Shah Alam-II (1759-1816) were blinded, and another, Alamgir-II (1754-1759) was assassinated by nobles engaged in bitter factional feuds. The speed with which this happened was bewildering. In 1700 the Mughal Empire under Aurungzeb was at its territorial zenith. Yet by the 1730s of the century many of its core areas had been fragmented into numerous regional polities. While some of these, like the Nawabi of Awadh or the Nizamat in Bengal, took roots as 'successor' regimes, others, like the Marathas or the

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Jats, emerged on the basis of their sustained and often violent opposition to the Mughal empire. A further thirty years down, the political fortunes of India were clearly moving in a different direction. A European power, the British East India Company, had succeeded in conquering much of eastern India and had begun to exercise a decisive influence on the state of affairs in other parts of the sub-continent. On the basis of these successful political ventures, the Company was slowly but inexorably creating the bases of an early-colonial system of rule. No wonder, contemporaries amazed at the intensity of the disturbances around them thought that this was an age when their world was being turned upside down. Given the nature of these changes, the eighteenth century has attracted the attention of a number of modern historians and has gradually emerged as the hub of a lively debate. Because of this, the historiography of this century has seen some very innovative advances.

While interpretations differ sharply on many aspects, there are a few areas of unanimity. The older interpretation that the decline of the Mughal Empire was a result of Aurungzeb's religious bigotry has been comprehensively rejected. If Aurungzeb faced opposition from the Marathas, the Jats and some Rajput clans, he was equally troubled by recalcitrant Muslim nobles and officials who were instrumental in leading the factional struggles in the imperial court, and powerful Rajput ruling houses continued to be loyal to the empire. The earlier stereotype that this was a century of moral decadence and cultural decay has also been rejected. Attention is now drawn to the robust and dynamic cultural life of the regional states, many of whom carried the legacies of high Mughal culture and blended these with the rich cultural heritage of the regions. Lucknow and Hyderabad had emerged as centres of literary and cultural patronage thus becoming the hubs of remarkable cultural efflorescence. Eighteenth century Banaras emerged as a great centre of banking and commerce in north India and combined this with its unique position as a centre of religion, education and pilgrimage. In Bengal, Nadia was the centre of Sanskrit learning and Dayabhaga Hindu law, and Bishnupur became the place where elaborate regional architectural and musical styles grew and flourished. In the south, Tanjore, under the patronage of its Maratha rulers, became a vibrant centre in the fields of religion, music and dance. Thus historians now view the decline of the Mughal Empire and its aftermath not as a result of religious bigotry or the weakness of individual rulers but as a structural process: as a systemic rather than the personal failure of an individual. But sharp differences nevertheless remain about the causes and nature of this systemic failure. Opinions are divided between those who view the decline as a result of an economic crisis engendered by an over-exploitative ruling class and those who see the entire process as a process of local resurgence fuelled by a long-term process of economic growth. There are also differing interpretations of the changing relationships between state and society, the patterns and processes of economic growth, and the consequences of the tussle between the empire and the localities over the distribution of the fruits of this growth. But the eighteenth century was not limited to the decline of the Mughal Empire and the consolidation of regional state systems. Much more fundamental changes were occurring in the sub-continent from the middle of the century,

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and these have understandably attracted the attention of a large number of historians with widely discordant voices. The areas of debate are centred around, first, the reasons of the transition of the Company from a commercial to a political entity; secondly, the roots of colonialism in India, whether it was a purely exogenous process, or did it have local, that is, indigenous roots; and thirdly, what was the nature of its social and economic impact. Implicated in these are questions of continuities and changes and the relative position and importance of each in the new colonial order.

1.2 THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY : SALIENT FEATURES

In order to understand the broad processes at work, and to make sense of the immense range of issues thrown up by the differing points of view, it is worth keeping in mind the following salient features of this century.

First, the eighteenth century witnessed two transitions. One occurred with the parcellisation of the Mughal Empire into regional, and even sub-regional, political entities. The genesis of this transition lay in the crisis of the empire and its subsequent disintegration. While this mainly involved the redistribution of political power among regional social groups, the other transition went much deeper. This occurred towards the middle of the century and was unleashed by the political ascendancy of the British East India Company after the battles of Plassey (1757) and Buxar (1763). Involved in this were some new developments, the most important being the transformation of an overseas trading organization, the East India Company, into a ruling power in India, and the use of this political supremacy for military and commercial purposes.

Second, in order to fathom its full implications historians are beginning to look upon the eighteenth century as a 'long' century. Recent interpretations tend to see the political dynamics of this century beginning to unfold in the 1680s amidst the fragmentation of the Mughal Empire. By the 1720s the after shocks of the disintegration had been absorbed by the stable regional polities which had emerged in most parts. From the 1750s major political realignments had started occurring under the growing hegemony of the Company. This process continued till the 1820s by which time all major indigenous regimes had been either annexed or had become subsidiary allies of the Company. Thus in terms of its political significance the eighteenth century encompassed the last two decades of the seventeenth and the first three decades of the nineteenth centuries. From the economic perspective too a 'long' view is a worthwhile one. There is now substantial evidence to show that political regeneration in the provinces was accompanied by regional economic re-orientation. While some places declined, economic growth occurred in other areas and this was spearheaded by local landed and commercial classes; and compared to a prevalent view which stresses economic dislocation from the middle of the century, recent research shows that despite the pressures being imposed on indigenous structures by the ascendancy of the Company, prospects of economic growth were not abruptly closed. Even in Bengal, where the Company's regime was at its most intrusive, commercial and agricultural expansion continued though in

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somewhat modified forms. Such was the situation till first two decades of the nineteenth century, when by all accounts the slow growth of the eighteenth century was coming to an end.

A third meaningful perspective, which has been of a recent vintage, is to see the relationship between the Indian economy and the global economy. The Indian Ocean was part of an elaborate commercial network with the Atlantic and the Pacific, and it was the increasing Europeanisation of early modern trade that set the tone and the future of India's commercial life in the eighteenth century. In its long engagement with this commerce, the Indian side had always provided goods and the services, but under conditions of demand which were mediated by the global networks of European commerce. The profits were significant from the Indian point of view, and much wealth flowed into India through this channel. From the perspective of understanding the eighteenth century, these developments are significant. A substantial part of the problem of continuity between the Mughal and post-Mughal and from there to the early-colonial can be understood if one remembers that Indian commercial life and merchant capital was deployed in the service of wider networks of connections whose impulses were determined as much as from Africa, South-east Asia and Europe as they were from Agra and Delhi. The early-colonial intervention deepened this incorporation. One instance of this was transformation in the networks of the intra-Asian trade in the middle of the eighteenth century when the earlier linkages between India and west Asia were now re-directed towards east and south-east Asia under the directions of British commerce. Since the eighteenth century was period of global economic expansion (compared to the seventeenth century which is commonly recognized a period of crisis), and since India's overseas trade also increased phenomenally in this period, any view which sees the eighteenth century only as a period of economic disjuncture or crisis is a questionable one.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the two transitions witnessed by the 18th century?

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.....

2) What was the relationship between the Indian economy and the global economy in the eighteenth century?

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1.3 THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DEBATE

Given the rapidity and the significance of the changes which occurred in the 18th century, it is natural that there are differing interpretations of almost every issue involved. Broadly, the debate follows the traditional division

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of this century into two halves and the protagonists of different points of view can be divided into two broad groups. For the period up to 1750, one can divide them into those who hold an empire-centric view and those who hold a region-centric view. For the period after 1750, the views can be held to broadly conform to the Indianist and Europeansist positions. In other words, for the first half of the 18th century, there are historians whose view of the 18th century is based on the centrality of the Mughal Empire and its institutions in the workings of the society and economy of the country. In this view the decline had catastrophic results. While the extreme edge of this view would interpret the decline as one of political chaos and anarchy, recent interpretations see it more in terms of a structural collapse but with very little positive emerging from the rubble. The regional formations, which succeeded the empire, are ascribed with little potential for improving their performances beyond the levels already achieved as Mughal provinces, whereas oppositional movements like the Jats, Sikhs and Marathas are considered nothing more than predatory-formations with very little positive to speak for them.

In contrast are those who view the developments from the perspective of the provinces and localities. Instead of giving the empire a superordinate role, as is done in the empirecentric perspective, the region-centric approach focuses on how social groups inhabiting different areas of the empire became active agents in determining the course of the political and economic trajectories for their own ends. At one level, the structures of Mughal provincial government was fundamentally transformed which led to the creation of autonomous kingdoms in Bengal, Awadh and Hyderabad. At another level there arose those polities, like the Marathas and Sikhs, whose genesis lay in opposition to the Mughals, but who, ironically, created political systems within the imperial domains which also made use of many of the administrative methods of the Mughals. All these modified provincial authorities gave the erstwhile Mughal grandees new opportunities to deepen their hold on power in the regions, and in addition, their clients and family members were also able to amass large bundles of proprietary rights and rights to farm revenue from the state which in course of time became hereditary estates. A process of commercial growth in the regions underpinned all this.

For the post-1750 situation, the Europeanist explanation gives primacy of place to the ascendancy of a triumphant, expansionist Europe (especially Britain) defeating an India in chaos and disarray. This is by far the most dominant view amongst Indian nationalist and Marxist historians, and provides the foremost historical perspective on the roots of India's economic backwardness. The nationalist view overwhelmingly has been to see the anarchy in eighteenth century India as a momentary but catastrophic lapse in an otherwise unfolding saga of nation building in India's history which allowed a foreign power to conquer and to colonise the country. While the more traditional Marxist view was to see the rise of British rule as a necessary evil as it ended much of the 'feudal' disintegration of society in the eighteenth century, more recent variants see it as a system relentlessly driven by the search for profits, commodities and markets, with no 'progressive' aspects to its credit. But some common assumptions are embedded in both historiographical perspectives as far as the eighteenth century is concerned.

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The first is the assumption shared by both that order and stability could exist only in large, pan-Indian political structures; and since this disappeared in the eighteenth century, it was a period of chaos, anarchy and decline. The second commonly shared ground is that of discontinuity. Both see British rule as a fundamental disjuncture: a completely foreign and alien system of domination, totally removed from the traditions of Indian governance or culture.

On the other hand, the Indianist perspective tries to adopt a more differentiated perspective of this transition to colonialism. The rise of the British power is seen not as a one-sided process of conquest and subjugation, but also as a result of Europe's (especially Britain's) deep engagement with India over a long period. Instead of a forced grafting of a foreign regime on Indian soil, the emphasis is on the way in which conditions in Indian society determined the emergence and form of British India. In this argument, the shape of British rule in India was determined as much by the metropolitan interests as it was by Indian agency. Instead of seeing the eighteenth century as a period of unchecked anarchy, the Indianist perspective devotes great attention to the political stability imparted by the 'successor' states of the Mughal Empire. Instead of seeing a picture of economic regression in the disintegration of the empire, the Indianist view is that India's commercial and military sophistication continued in the eighteenth century and the Company used this to its advantage. While there was strong indigenous resistance to this intrusion, Indian agency was a vital ingredient in ensuring the ultimate success of British rule in India. British rule was based on Indian norms of governance, modes of agro-commercial management and the skills of its human resources, but it successfully modified these for its own purposes. Thus in the Indianist view, the eighteenth century was not a century of ruptures, but a century of deep continuities in which past institutions and structures continued albeit in substantially redeployed forms in the midst of vastly expanding commercial opportunities. Those subscribing to this view are often infelicitously referred to as the 'Cambridge School' as many of the protagonsists are situated in North America and a number of Indian historians also share this perspective. However, together they constitute what is commonly referred to as 'revisionist' historians.

1.4 THE MUGHAL EMPIRE, ITS DECLINE AND THE GENESIS OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Much has been written about the decline of the Mughal Empire. As stated earlier, theories of moral turpitude, weak rulers and communal policies need not be taken seriously as they are empirically unsustainable. Later Mughal emperors, for example Farrukh Siyar, tried in their own way to stem the rot. There is no evidence to suggest that these emperors abdicated their responsibilities, but events were moving too fast for a single person to handle. The other theories focus on a rapidly disintegrating structure, a severe crisis in the Empire's fiscal and jagirdari systems, which severely compromised the institutions of governance. This has been written about extensively and Irfan Habib's arguments have been the most influential. For Habib, while the capacity of the economy to expand was self-limiting, there

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was an unrestrained tendency of the Mughal fiscal system to appropriate greater and greater amounts of the peasants' surplus. This sparked off a tri-polar confrontation between the imperial ruling class, the hereditary land holding classes (the zamindars) and peasants, which soon went beyond the capacity of the system to contain or control. Satish Chandra provided important reason when he explained the empire's demise in the inability of state functionaries to ensure the desired efficiency of the assignment (jagir) system, thus leading to intense factional struggles. In a similar vein Athar Ali saw the crisis as a result of a growing shortage of jagirs and the inability of the system to accommodate the growing number of aspirants to the assignment system in the aftermath of Aurungzeb's Deccan campaigns. However, an important corrective to this was provided by John Richards who showed that be-jagiri (jagir-less) wasn't problem in the Deccan as it was not a deficit area, but it was the larger failure to devise a viable system of accommodating local elites in the Deccan which was proving to be the Empire's major drawback in the Deccan. In this view, the crisis arose because of an imperfect imperial consolidation, visible in the failure of the state to effectively incorporate the local agrarian elite, thereby creating deep fissures in the empire.

An interesting argument made by Marshall Hodgson is that the three Islamic empires – the Ottoman, the Safavid and the Mughal – were successful not because of their adherence to a single formal religion, but because of their successful control over the deployment of gunpowder, and the reason why they atrophied or failed ultimately was because of their inability to keep up with the changing technologies of warfare that were happening in the western hemisphere. Can this be applied to the Indian case? Recently, Iqtidar Alam Khan has drawn our attention to the simultaneous correspondence between gunpowder, centralization and resistance: while access to muskets, cannons and gunpowder strengthened the sinews of imperial power, these were simultaneously used by its more powerful subjects to arm themselves and to resist the intrusion of the state. It was logistically impossible to prevent such crucial technology from percolating downwards. Therefore, any notion of the state's exclusive control over firepower as a prescription of its success tends to break down as zamindars, chaudhuris, and dominant-peasant groups controlled large numbers of armed militia. The Marathas, the Sikhs and the Jats used muskets, as did most other rural-magnates. One must also remember that these people enjoyed various traditional rights and perquisites because of their social/caste standing in the countryside. This made them capable of drawing additional human resources to augment their military strength if necessary, which they did regularly. Though the Mughal army controlled a great amount of military hardware, as a collectivity the local magnates were always a serious military threat, especially considering their strategic location in the countryside. By the eighteenth century the terms of reference between the state and rural magnates, as far as military technology was concerned had equalized because of the concerted upsurge in the countryside. Stewart Gordon has shown how the Marathas were successful in tapping into a vast and heterogeneous military labour market, including the one being provided by Europeans, in the eighteenth century.

Therefore, in order to understand the process of Mughal decline one has to

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take both a long-term view and a conjunctural view. The long-term view is that the Mughal Empire provided a number of institutions ostensibly to centralize power, but unfortunately those led to periodic crises in institutional and fiscal arrangements of the empire, which the Mughals were unable to sort out effectively. Some examples of this are the inability of the state to affect parity between assessment of revenue (the jama) and what was actually collected (the hasil), or its failure to prevent transmission losses of up to 20 percent of its revenue from the countryside. There was also the more structural inability of the empire between a set of enduring systems between the agrarian elite and the state. Both existed in a state of perennial contradiction. Of course, there were instances of rapprochements between the two. For example, there was the so-called Rajput policy of Akbar; but even this did not cover the whole of Rajputana or the entire grid of Rajput clans, nor was it able to contain a potent source of political friction. This was further aggravated by the inability of the state to strike out workable (consensual) arrangements with a myriad of small zamindars scattered even in the heartland of the empire as well as all over the country, and this accentuated problems. Mawasat and zor-talab (perennially refractory areas) thus existed cheek by jowl with sir-i hasil lands. These were the longterm structural problems.

The conjunctural problem assumed the form of the Deccan crisis, and the sustained oppositional movements of the Jats and the Mewatis in the north India, particularly in the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, and of the Sikhs in the Punjab. Other places, like eastern India, where great commercial advances had taken place in the seventeenth century, there was the difficulty of getting adequate tribute as zamindars had been able to use a slack revenue system to their advantage. Though this did not cause political instability, it accentuated the financial problems of the empire. This was accompanied by the convergent crisis in two other Asiatic empires which disrupted the established and highly profitable commercial linkages between India and west Asia. In fact in one influential explanation of the economic problems being faced by the great Mughal port of Surat is ascribed to the crisis of these empires.

The conjunctural crises intensified the long-term conflicts between the imperial imperative and the local imperative and brought the empire to its knees.

What is being suggested here is that to understand the endogenous processes of centralization, decentralization, and crisis in the Mughal Empire, the constantly changing and negotiated relationship between the centre and the localities, and the perpetual tensions between the imperial ruling class and the local magnates, have to be kept in mind. These relationships were never fixed at the dictates of the state; they were constantly changing and unfolding. The analysis of the Mughal Empire as an establishment of negotiated political relationships means that there was greater flux in its interstices, and this fluidity allowed for a greater constellation of social groups in different parts of the empire and this explains the various social configurations in different parts of the empire. Studying the empire in terms of the fluidity of the relationship between the centre and the provinces allows us to understand articulation between the regions and the centre. The

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more the empire tried to centralize, the gainers were the regional groups, which latched on to this process of centralization and benefited from it. As the empire generated enormous wealth through its revenue mechanisms, the tussle between its maximization and the attempts to retaining larger and larger proportions of this wealth in the localities grew stronger.

1.5 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF RISE OF REGIONAL POLITIES

If one adopts a region-centric perspective, alternative versions of the empire and its collapse begin to emerge. Even in the Persian language sources, there are possibilities of reading more decentralized and vulnerable versions of the empire. For example, Andre Wink's advances the notion of fitna to argue that the system was constantly being subverted from within, and that there were forces of factionalism and centrifugalism constantly pulling away from the centre. Stephen Blake's description of the Mughal system as a 'patrimonial-bureaucratic' edifice is another such variant reading. What this means is that the Mughals were always walking a tightrope while attempting to balance an elaborately personalized style of rule (the patrimonial) with a highly militarized and centralized vision of the empire. This created a peculiar contradiction, and as M.N. Pearson has argued, the Mughals failed to bridge the gap between a paternalistic, highly personalized form of government and its military aspirations; that while trying to be militarily effective it was not able to carve out a system of rule based on an autonomous militarybureaucratic system. Muzaffar Alam also shows how the imperial process was continuously being subverted by the aims and aspirations of the local gentry constantly attempting to consolidate themselves at the expense of the imperial ruling class.

What we now see is a whole range of pressures pulling away from the Mughal state: these ranged from factions at the centre to the independent consolidation of the local and regional elite. The nature of the elite was not the same everywhere. While in Awadh such people belonged to the upper echelons of the social system (the ashraf), elsewhere they could include more 'subaltern' elements like the Jat peasantry in the Punjab or the Sadgop zamindaris on the fringes of the settled zones in Bengal. Merchants and bankers played a crucial role in underwriting them for a consideration. It is this diversity which appears as a striking feature of the newly constituted regional elite in the eighteenth, thus giving us a picture of a system buffeted by multi-polar tensions. The crisis now can be seen as one created by resurgent aspirations of groups below composed of what C.A. Bayly has described as 'many types of military, merchant and political entrepreneurs' all coming together to 'capitalise on the buoyant trade and production of the Mughal realm'. This resurgence did not mean a decline; it meant the social displacement at the top combined with the replacement of some institutions and the reconstitution of others.

The basic point is that seeds of change germinated within the Mughal institutions themselves. Paradoxically, the institutions of centralization generated their own counter-tendencies. Much of the process of regionalization can be explained by the consolidation of the imperial elite who

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took advantage of the disintegrating jagirdari-mansabdari complex for their own purposes. Similar tendencies were at work in the zamindari system too. While the Mughals sought to make the zamindars work as intermediaries in their land revenue administration, these local elites, highly armed and ruling over substantial domains like petty kings, generated alternative, localized, sub-imperialisms. Also recent researches, particularly in the Mughal provinces of Awadh and Bengal, have done much to revise the older views of zamindars as a class of rural exploiters. On the contrary, they were active agents in local economies as financiers, entrepreneurs and consumers. They financed agricultural reclamation, set up markets and traded, and consumed in cash. Their retainers became a sub-elite between them and the peasants, as they were usually given prebends, which they used to extend small zones of high-value consumption in the countryside. They thus rose in rebellion to defend the fruits of their prosperity from the intrusive pressures of state fiscalism. These in turn were used by the provincial satraps to enhance their powers vis-à-vis the centre. In Awadh, the provincial subahdar enhanced his power by using such agrarian disturbances as a bargaining counter against the centre. In Bengal, the subahdar used the pressing financial needs of the empire and the recalcitrance of some local zamindars to augment his power base.

Recent studies of the political processes in eighteenth century have indicated the growth of three types of regimes. First, there were those that replicated the former imperial structures. Ruling these 'successor' states that nominal Mughal governorships: thenawabs of the Deccan, Awadh, and Bengal who tended to perpetuate Mughal forms and practices. The second types of regimes were the polities whose origins were independent of the Mughal Empire. These were the Maratha, the Jat and the Sikh regimes, whose crystallization established new systems, thus representing a real and persistent danger to the Mughal Empire. The third political complex was extremely significant. This comprised many local principalities of Muslim, Hindu or tribal origin located in the frontiers of the semi-autonomous states. As burgeoning Jat zamindars began to push them out of the Ganga-Yamuna Doab, Rajput clans began establishing petty- kingdoms from Gujarat in the west to Awadh in the north through a process of conquest, migration and settlement. In Rohilkhand and Bhopal, Afghan chiefdoms were established by an innovative combination of conquest, revenue-farming and trading with the northwest frontier. Agricultural colonization, revenue farming and commercial dealings were also instrumental in the consolidation of the Banaras Raj and the great zamindari households of Burdwan or Qasimbazar in Bengal. On the northeast frontier of India Mughal expansion was stopped in the 1680s by the Ahom dynasty that maintained an independent Assam under a Hindu tradition of kingship until the British annexed it in the early nineteenth century.

In the south, while the really great royalist concentration occurred only from the 1760s in Mysore, the situation before that, as David Ludden shows, was characterized by petty kingdoms being formed by the Telugu-speaking nayakas, who had been subordinate to Vijayanagar and had established their autonomy on its downfall, or from palayakkarans or (poligars) who

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managed to carve out small domains from the territory of the nayakas, based on temples and a highly militarised population. On the Malabar coast, the situation was an uneasy alliance between the coastal kingdoms and the land-owning households held together by a mutual sharing of profits from trade, land and labour. An intrusive monarchical system was introduced in this region only after the invasion by the aggressive Mysore state under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan.

Check Your Progress 2

1) 'The eighteenth century was a century of universal decline.' Comment.

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2) How would you view the eighteenth century in the context of the regions emerging as vibrant centers of socio-economic activities?

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

The eighteenth century was marked by the decline of the Mughal Empire, giving rise to the emergence of several regional centres of power. Towards the middle of the century another factor came into the forefront with the establishment of the political power of the British East India Company, which ad much deeper implications. The eighteenth century is interpreted by the historians from two angles, one set of historians, following an empire-centric approach, argue that the decline of the Mughal empire was catastrophic resulting in 'chaos and anarchy'. The other set of historians, who have followed a region-centric approach, emphasize that though the empire declined, this did not result in 'chaos and anarchy'. Regions became vibrant centers of socio-economic activities and the Indian economy continued to expand despite the political problems. This process was not substantially disrupted under early British rule, though numerous changes did emerge which were subjecting the Indian economy to unprecedented financial burdens.

1.7 KEY WORDS

Chaudhuri : Semi-hereditary pargana level official, mainly concerned with revenue collection.

Jagirdari System : The assignments given in lieu of salary to the nobles. The areas thus assigned were called jagir and its holder jagirdar. However,

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jagirdar was not allotted the land instead he received the income/revenue from the area assigned to him. Jagirs were frequently transferable.

Mansabdari System : Mansab means rank. Each individual entered in the Mughal bureaucracy was allotted a mansab. It has dual ranks – zat and sawar. Zat determined the status of its holder in the official hierarchy and the personal pay of the holder. Sawar rank denotes how much contingent (horses, horsemen, and equipment) a mansabdar was supposed to maintain.

Taalluqdar : Substitute for zamindar. The term came into usage during the late 17th century.

Zamindar : Hereditary superior right holder. The zamindar was entitled to a percentage of the total revenue collected. It was generally 10% (though varies upto 25%) of the total revenue collected. When the zamindar was collecting the revenue for the state it was known as nankar and when the state was directly collecting the revenue by-passing him he was entitled to malikana.

1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec.1.2

2) See Sec.1.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 1.4

2) See Sec.1.5

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UNIT 2 EMERGENCE OF INDEPENDENT STATES

Structure

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand the following:

- the emergence of independent regional power after the decline of Mughal power,
- enable you to study the process in which the political formation of Mysore and Hyderabad evolved in the 18th century,
- show how this process was crucially different in the two regions, and indicate certain reasons as to why the two processes were different,
- the development in the Punjab polities before the establishment of the Sikh rule, the transformation of the Sikh religious order into a

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political force, and

- the process through which the Sikh state emerged.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The emergence of regional powers was perhaps the most significant political development after decline of Mughals. Three groups of states can be distinguished in this process. The successor states, Hyderabad, Awadh and Bengal were erstwhile provinces of the Mughal empire which broke away to become independent. The 'new states' were the creation of the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats and Afghans; in this process in some of these states, an important role was played by popular peasant movements against imperial demands. A third category was that of the independent kingdoms of Mysore, the Rajputs and Kerala. In provinces where governors under the Mughals set up independent states, the breakaway from Delhi occurred in stages– the revolt of individuals followed by that of the social groups, communities and finally regions. Zamindari revolts in the provinces against imperial demands triggered off the breakaway. Governors did not get support from the centre and tried to secure support of the local elites. The second group of regional states were the 'new states' or 'insurgent states' set up by rebels against the Mughals– the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats and Afghans. The first three began as popular movements of peasant insurgency. The leadership was not with the nobility but with 'new men' often from lower orders. Our focus will be on the emergence of the states of Mysore and Hyderabad. The rise of the Sikh state provides yet another illustration for us. We will see here that despite of the continuity of the earlier political institutions certain basic changes occur in the nature of the polities formed. This happened in different ways in Mysore and Hyderabad. While in Hyderabad the Mughal political institutions were weakened and used for regional consolidation, in Mysore on the other hand the Wodeyar dynasty was overthrown to form a stronger overhauled administration. Both the processes led initially to the consolidation of autonomy in the middle decades of the 18th century. However, links with the centre were maintained and Mughal tradition continued.

2.2 RISE OF MYSORE

The kingdom of Mysore lay south of Hyderabad. In the 18th century the rulers of Mysore, from the Wodeyars to Tipu Sultan, were to face the expansionist threat of the Marathas on the one hand and that of Hyderabad and Carnatic on the other, while the English were to exploit the situation to their advantage. One of the most well-known eighteenth century personalities is Tipu Sultan, almost a folk-hero symbolising resistance to British aggrandisement and also an object of malignment in British accounts of their rise to power. Mysore was transformed from a viceroyalty of the Vijaynagar Empire into an autonomous state by the Wodeyar dynasty. It was left to Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan to establish Mysore as a major military power in the south of India. Haidar was of unaristocratic origin and hostile English contemporaries often termed him an usurper- this has influenced later historians. But he was an usurper in same sense

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as the dalwai or the prime minister, he replaced in Mysore was an usurper. The dalwai had reduced the titular Wodeyar king to a cipher and like the previous dalwai, Nanjraj, Haidar began as an official serving the state. He displayed his military genius in strengthening the army, in bringing under control the fiercely independent local chiefs or poligars, and in subjugating Bednove, Sunda, Seva, Canara and Guti. His greatest moment of triumph was when he chased the English troops within five miles of Madras and dictated a treaty in 1769. In this section we shall study how Mysore was strengthened and established as a major regional power.

2.3 ROLE OF WAR AND MILITARIZATION IN MYSORE

The significance of war and its companion militarization seems to go back further in the Mysore history. Burton Stein, in fact traces it back to the times of the historic Vijaynagar Empire in 16th century. The Vijaynagar state was the first in South India to use firearms in establishing its control over the local rajas and other external powers.

2.3.1 The Local Chiefs

To understand as to why the early militarization in Mysore was necessary, it is important to understand the role played by the local chiefs. The local chiefs, mainly *poligars*, were descendants of the hunter-gatherers of the forests who had acquired military skills and local political leadership in the military service of the Vijaynagar Empire. By the 18th century most of them had become powerful through two main factors– (a) the control of revenue and tribute from agriculture on their lands and (b) through the support of priests of the temples of their own community. This combined with the fact that the temples were also centres of trading activity made the local chiefs powerful forces who could affect the growth of any centralized state in Mysore. This further meant that a tussle of force and military might between Mysore and the *poligars* would be the determining factor in establishing a polity at Mysore.

2.3.2 The 18th Century Thrusts

This tussle in 18th century was initiated by Chikkadeva-raja Wodeyar (1672-1704). Under him Mysore moved towards an unprecedented militarization. To sustain this increased military capacity he increased the general revenue collection by the state official and exempted lands held by his soldiers from revenue demands.

Haidar Ali, who had gradually worked up his way in the hierarchy of Mysore administration, consolidated himself precisely with such tactics. He auctioned off large territories to ambitious warriors, who as tax farmers, pressed revenue demands upon the local chiefs. Haidar Ali refused these chiefs any claim to independence and if they resisted they were driven off their lands. By limiting the scope of these chiefs' activities, Haidar further eroded their local base. Tipu Sultan, his son, went further in the subjugation of the poligars. After expelling them he rented out their lands to either private individuals or government officials. Further, by insisting to pay a regular salary to his troops rather than pay them with spoils of war, Tipu was able to ensure that no vested interest could emerge in the army in a tie

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up with the local chiefs.

In certain respects Haidar and Tipu also tried to overcome certain weaknesses in the organization of the army. There was an attempt to induce organizational discipline more strongly along European lines. For this French soldiers were recruited and used for training special troops. The French general De La Tour, whose detailed account of his service under Haidar is available to us, tells us that by 1761 the French personnel in the Mysore army had considerably increased. This must have helped in the training of the infantry and the artillery. Secondly the European discipline attempted to conquer attitudes of hostility and ambivalence towards modem firearms and cannons as noted by Sanjay Subramaniam in the study of warfare in Wodeyar Mysore.

2.4 ADMINISTRATION OF MYSORE

Another achievement of Haidar and later Tipu was the consolidation of the apparatus of administration. In effect the older administration of the Wodeyars was retained intact by Haidar and Tipu.

The 18 departments of the administration ranging from military and revenue, to information were retained. Among the top officials individuals like Khande Rao, Venkatappa or Mir Sadik who had demonstrated their competence were retained inspite of political fluctuations. In fact changes were made only when the top officials were caught in cases of financial frauds. Thomas Munro was of the opinion that it was the scope offered by native ruler 'Hindu or Mussalman' for personal wealth and ambition which made the 'higher orders' prefer the native rulers rather than the 'humble mediocrity' of the company's service.

2.5 FINNANCIAL RESOURCES OF MYSORE

However, the distinguishing feature of the Mysore administration under Haidar and Tipu lay in building the base of their military-political authority by augmenting their financial resources for running the state. For this, both the merchant and the peasant, the twin movers of finance and production in 18th century Mysore had to be tackled.

2.5.1 Revenue from Land

Land was classified into various categories and the mode of assessment varied from one category Ito the other. *Ijara* land was leased on fixed rents to the peasants. On *hissa* land rent was assessed as a share of the produce. Further rent on watered land was paid in the form of a portion of the produce and on dry land in terms of money.

Land was sought to be kept under a system of survey and control combined with measures to encourage tillers by adequate relief and protection. A strong 'system of state control was evolved where an *amildar* controlled the revenue administration and *asufdar* looked after the legalities of rent disputes. Intermediaries were sought to be removed and a direct link between the interests of the state and the interests of die peasantry was sought to be established to maximise revenue for the state. Tipu took measures like denying revenue farming rights to main government officials to protect

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peasants against the revenue farmers.

The land revenue policy under Tipu even envisaged independent individual initiative to develop facilities for agriculture; Rent free land was gifted to individuals for the construction of irrigation and other infrastructure. Thus a class of people who could support agricultural development independently was sought to be created.

However, these measures were offset to a large extent by the practice of farming off lands and the *jagir* system whereby *jagir* was granted in perpetuity to a particular family. On the other hand the agricultural produce was by force of custom shared by entire village community. Here, as Nikhilesh Guha shows the majority of the share of produce was going to the dominant or upper castes that mostly performed ritual functions. So there was no way the agricultural surplus could be used to initiate development within the farming community. The cultivator was left without much resource for agricultural development.

Above all the state accorded priority to war. Marathas, Hyderabad, Carnatic and the English occupied the major attention of the Sultans. This meant, inevitably, a disproportionate rise in military expense and consequent rise in the revenue demand. Tipu for example, had raised his land revenue by 30% at the height of his defeats. No sustained agricultural development thus could be possible and forcing the cultivator to pay more was an inevitable consequence.

2.5.2 Revenue from Trade

Merchants had been playing an important role in the Mysore economy for the last couple of centuries. Linking the inland, external trade and revenue farming the significant amongst them held a portfolio of these diverse investments in trade and land. At the level of political operation they often used existing custom and traditional lies to get their interests protected amongst the rulers in power. Their intervention in land was significant enough. As Sanjay Subramaniam points out, that inspite of some of them being big revenue farmers the area under their cultivation prospered rather than declined. This indicated the importance they attached to land and the significance of the trickling in of trade profits towards land. The prosperous merchants were then important actors in Mysore scene.

Tipu realised the importance of these traders and their trade. He appointed *asufs* to train officials to run trade centres established by him for keeping trade in control.

Trade capital was to be provided for these trade centres from the revenue collected by the state officials. Provision was made for accepting deposits of private persons as investment in the state trade with returns fixed around 35%. Private traders were allowed to participate here in sale of commodities thought to be beneficial to the state. Regular inspection of financial records of these centres was undertaken. Further, currency was strictly regulated.

However the dimension of the private traders' activities, in the context of the British domination of the sea trade, seems to have been perceived as a potential threat, perhaps in the form of alliance between the native merchants and the English. In 1785 he declared an embargo at his ports on the export

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of pepper, sandalwood and cardamoms. In 1788 he explicitly forbade trade with the English.

Check Your Progress 1

1) The local chiefs under Tipu
   a) were freely asserting their authority
   b) were kept completely under control
   c) never existed
   d) both a) and c)

2) War
   a) was completely absent from the agenda of Mysoe polity
   b) was an important component of the techniques to establish Mysore polity
   c) was to determine the balance of power between the local chiefs and the Mysore state in the 18th century
   d) both b) and c)

3) Land revenue under Tipu
   a) was mainly collected through revenue farmers
   b) was mainly collected by government officials appointed by Tipu
   c) tended to be collected by intermediaries
   d) was not allowed to go into the hands of the Sultan

4) The profits of individual traders in Mysore
   a) did trickle down to agriculture
   b) never trickled down to agriculture
   c) mainly went in the industry.
   d) none of the above

2.6 HYDERABAD AS AN INDEPENDENT STATE

Hyderabad polity seems to have followed a different kind of pattern from Mysore. Here the Mughal influence in the earlier days was more prominent. Normally during the days of Mughal Empire the Subadar of Deccan was posted at Hyderabad. An attempt was made to introduce the Mughal administrative system. Inspite of continual Mughal-Maratha conflict and internal tensions this system served to highlight the order of Mughal Empire in Deccan. However, in the wake of the decline of the Mughal Empire this system seems to have come into crisis.

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Nizam Asaf Jah was first appointed a subadar (in charge of province) by the Mughal emperor in 1713. But only after a military victory over his rival Mughal appointee in 1724 that he could take effective charge of the Deccan. After this period he stayed on in Deccan and went to the Mughal court only after leaving his appointee in charge. Subsequently, be removed the Mughal officials in Hyderabad and installed his own men. He also assumed the right of making treaties, wars and granting *mansabs* and titles. Now gradually the Mughal authority was reduced to a symbolic reading of *Khutba* etc. By the time of Nizam Ali Khan (1762-1803) Carnatic, Marathas and Mysore had all settled their territorial claims and some kind of a stable political pattern emerged in Hyderabad.

2.6.1 Warfare and the Army

As elsewhere, the army was an important component of the polity that emerged in Hyderabad. The Nizam-ul-Mulk essentially followed a policy of allowing the existing *jagirdari* holdings. The military commanders and their troops were tied to the political system through their individual employer, mainly the nobles. Unlike Mysore, the local chief's authority in Hyderabad was allowed to remain intact. Like in the Mughal army, the Hyderabad army too was maintained from the cash allowances drawn by the nobles from the Nizam's treasury.

The army was important to contain the Marathas, the Carnatic Nawab, Mysore or the English. However unlike Mysore, the thrust to gear up state finances directly for war seem to be definitely weaker than Mysore. Let us turn to the main source of finance-the land revenue system and see whether indeed there was a difference in emphasis in mobilising revenue for the state.

2.7 LAND REVENUE SYSTEM

The land revenue system in Hyderabad was different from Mysore in the sense that unlike Tipu and Haidar who made an attempt to directly control revenue through a huge bureaucracy, the rulers of Hyderabad allowed intermediaries to function.

M.A. Nayeem has noted the existence of *ijara* or revenue farming land. Secondly, there were a large number of *peshkush* zamindars whose lands were not officially assessed but required to give an annual tribute or *pesbkush*

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on the basis of their own assessment records. Thirdly, Nayeem points out, that even where the zamindars and deshpandes (village chiefs) had to pay the land revenue assessed by the state, their consent was obtained.

While the revenue was supposed to be 50% of the produce, it was very rarely that this proportion was collected. The importance of intermediaries (between the state & land revenue payers) is established from the fact that the state's collection, i.e., *Jamabandi* was always lower than *Kamil* i.e., the assessment figure for revenue arrived at with the landlord's consent. As Nayeem shows, the difference between the two, i.e. *Kamil* and *Jama*, was the 'zamindar's share'. Secondly, from the documents on revenue of the Nizam period "we may conclude that the actual revenue too declined".

In Hyderabad *jagirs* or land grants for service to the state tended to become hereditary. While in Mysore there was an attempt to check this, in Hyderabad no serious measure to do so seems to have been taken. Moreover, the *jagirdars* (taking advantage of hereditary succession), became strong so that even in the context of declining actual revenue "the question of *jagirdars* receiving lesser revenue receipts from the *jagirs* assigned to them than the actual amount due to them, does not arise at all".

The land revenue administration in Hyderabad had officers under *amils* (provincial heads). Measures for regular assessment and survey were taken. Encouragement was given to the cultivator by the state policy of loans and reprieves.

However, all these features were undermined by the power and importance of intermediaries. We saw above that their role was decisive in the assessment and collection of revenue.

This in turn was to have important consequences in the shaping of Hyderabad polity under the Nizams. A network of intermediary interests on land seem to have existed which could be the political base for the competition to power and influence at the top.

2.8 PATRONS AND CLIENTS

Karen Leonard identifies lose "patron-client relationships" in the Hyderabad political system. The main patrons she identifies broadly as the Nizam and the powerful nobles. While the Nizam broadly maintained his hold, the circle of nobles around him changed from time to time.

The nobility in the Nizam's period did not have uniform criteria for career advancement under the Mughals. Personal relations with Nizam or military skills were becoming important. So to become powerful in Hyderabad, the mansab rank (as under Mughal system) did not prevent the rise of the noble. Many Zamindars or Jagirdars who could rally the smaller intermediaries behind them, could with a little military skill and diplomacy become powerful.

Earlier the ordered administrative hierarchy or formal land revenue regulations of the Mughals and restricted the scope of accumulating power and wealth. However now the institutional set up was weak enough to allow a straight away grab at the political stakes at the top.

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2.8.1 Vakils

Aiding this process of grabbing wealth and power was a network of intermediate clients called the vakils. These vakils acted as agents between Nizam and nobles, nobles and nobles and Nizam and outside powers. The vakils also provided opportunities for individuals within the huge and affluent establishments maintained by the Hyderabadi nobles.

The vakils normally acted on the basis of interests of individuals and were powerful only in so far as their patron was powerful. However switching of loyalties, for personal gain was common. In an atmosphere where no uniform criteria for career advancement existed, the vakils represented forces of individual initiative in the competition for power and wealth.

2.9 THE LOCAL CHIEFS

Unlike Mysore, the local chiefs under the Nizam continued to control their inherited land on the payment of tribute to the Nizam. Though they played the role of patrons like Nizams and his nobles, they were never fully integrated within the Hyderabad political system. Nor did their vakils maintain relationship with other rulers. The local chiefs did not even follow the life style of Hyderabad court and as such seemed content to remain out of the sphere of the court politics. However, they could become decisive individual factors when the Hyderabad court was weak.

2.10 FINANCIAL AND MILITARY GROUPS

Bankers; money-lenders and military commanders (usually mercenaries) played an important role in the political system of Hyderabad. They played a key role since they provided essential financial and military service. Their strength derived mainly from the community they came from and in contrast to the vakils they functioned as caste or community groups. Some of the main community or caste groups amongst the financial groups were the Agarwal and Marwaris while Afghans and Arabs were prominent military groups. By threatening to withdraw support and services these individuals and groups could at their level play an important role in the balance of the polity.

2.11 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

The administrative system seems to follow the trend of other aspects of the Hyderabad polity. The earlier Mughal institutions apparently continued but now allowing the consolidation of the vested interests, in the process allowing individuals to profit. The most illustrative is the case of the office of diwan who conducted most of the day-to-day affairs of the kingdom. Here instead of the diwan, the subordinate hereditary office of *daftardars* or the record keepers became more important. In the absence of salaried officials to conduct matters like revenue, these record keepers were able to exercise real control by deciding the amount of revenue by local *deshpande* or *taluqdar* and putting it on records. This allowed a lot of them also to make a huge amount of wealth.

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Check Your Progress 2

1) In Hyderabad the amount of revenue to be collected
   a) was decided by the diwan
   b) was decided by the Nizam
   c) was decided by record keepers (*daftardars*) with the consent of *deshpandes* or local intermediaries
   d) was decided by the people
2) The Vakils in Hyderabad were
   a) prominent merchants
   b) prominent soldiers
   c) prominent men of arts
   d) basically agents between various centres of power and influence
3) The rule of Nizam of Hyderabad after 1724
   a) was completely under the Mughals
   b) was symbolically under the Mughals
   c) was completely under the French
   d) was completely under the Portuguese
4) The local chiefs in Hyderabad
   a) were completely subjugated by the Nizam
   b) remained individual potentates
   c) both b) and c)
   d) never existed

2.12 SIKHISM : RELIGIOUS TO POLITICAL IDENTITY

The Punjab, In the 15th and 16th century a series of reformist movements revitalised the Indian religious belief systems. In the midst of these movements, a new order of Sikhism was born in the Punjab. The founder of this newly emerging sect was Guru Nanak who named his followers as Sikhs, which literally means the learner or disciple. In course of time as the new cult spread, the name Sikh became the descriptive title of the people, a designation not ethnic but religious. Guru Nanak's religious movement was peaceful, non-sectarian and motivated towards reconciliation with secular life. Guru Nanak was succeeded by a long line of nine Gurus, who in a period of about 200 years, not only organized and strengthened the Sikh brotherhood, but built it up as a powerful fighting force to face the challenges of the Mughal emperors and their governors. Thus, Guru Angud developed the script *Gurumukhi*, Guru Ram Das laid the foundations of Amritsar temple. Guru Arjun Dev compiled the Adi Granth. Guru Har Govind trained the Sikhs in military art and warfare tactics. Guru Govind Singh organized the Sikhs into a well organized fighting forcz, with Khalsa as its organizational focus. After Guru Govind Singh's death the institution of Guruship ded and the leadership of the Sikh brotherhood passed to his

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trusted disciple Banda Bairagi, popularly known as Banda Bahadur. He carried a vigorous struggle against the Mughal forces for nearly 8 years. In 1715 he was captured and executed. After Banda's execution for more than a decade the Mughal authorities tried to bring the rebellious Sikhs under control. But this attempt was not successful. A number of factors helped the Sikhs to organize and establish themselves as the most powerful political force in the Punjab. These were, the weakening of the Mughal imperial authority since the early decades of the 18th century, the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Maratha incursion, lack of cohesion and coordination in the provincial administration, and the defiance of imperial authority by various local chiefs and Zamindars. All these created a very fluid situation in the Punjab in the 18th century and from this the Sikhs emerged as the most powerful. The death of Ahmad Shah Abdali sounded the death knell of thk Afghan hegemony in Northern India. With the collapse of the Afghan power, the Sikh confederacies assumed a predominant role in the Punjab and succeeded in carving out independent principalities under their respective chiefs. In the face of the repression by the Mughal authorities the Sikhs organized themselves into numerous small and highly mobile bands called *jathas*, each commanded by a *Jathedar*. Realizing the need for a united course of action the *jathedars* tried to form a confederation and they met in a group on the occasion of the Baisakhi and Diwali festivals. Although these could not be organized regularly, these promoted solidarity among the various groups. The defeat of the Mughals and the Marathas by the Afghans was an added advantage for the Sikhs to consolidate their base in the Punjab. So the period from 1765 onwards showed a steady development of Sikh political power which culminated in the establishment of an autonomous state in the early 19th century. In the second half of the 18th century the numerous small Sikh groups had regrouped themselves into 12 larger regional confederacies or *Misls* under the leadership of various local chiefs. Thus, the Bhangis had control over territories between Jhelum and the Indus and on Lahore and Amritsar the Ramgarhias had command over the Jalandhar Doab the Kanhayas had control over the Raikri tract the Singhpurias had control over the regions east and west of the river Sutlej. The Ahluwalias had command over Raikot and Kapurthala the Sulkerchakias had control over Gujranwals, Wazirabad the Phblkias controlled Malwa and Sirhind. These *Misls* were based originally on the principle of equality, wherein each member had an equal say in deciding the affairs of the respective *Misls* and electing the Chief and other officers of the organization. The unity and the democratic character that the *Misls* had at the initial stage gradually withered away with the removal of the threat of the Afghan invasion. In coulse of time this democratic character ended with the emergence of powerful chiefs, their mutual bickerings and internecine warfare. This internal conflict sapped the vitality of the *Misls*. Ultimately Ranjit Singh, the leader of the Sulaerchakia *Misl*, emerged as the most powerful among other chiefs and by force of *aq'ms* he brought unity among the Sikhs.

2.13 RISE OF SIKH STATE

The development in the Punjab polity took a new turn with the rise of Ranjit Singh. The process that started in the 18th century, for the establishment

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of the Sikh tenitorial organization, culminated in the establishment of an autonomous state in the Punjab by Ranjit Singh in the first half of the 19th century. Ranjit Singh was the son of the Sukerchakia *Misl* Chief, Mahan Singh. He was only 12 years of age when his father died in 1792. He inherited a small kingdom comprizing Gujranwala, Wazirabad and some area in Sialkot, Rohtas and Pind Dandan Khan. This was the time when the Sikh confederacies were fighting among themselves for supremacy. This internal fighting of the Sikh chiefs and the Afghan invasions under Zaman Shah in 1795, 1796 and 1798 helped Ranjit Singh in consolidating his power in the Punjab. Ranjit Singh was able to curb the power of the independent Sikh principalities and brought them under single political authority.

During the first few years Ranjit Singh's major problem was to check the growing power of his Diwan Lakhpat Rai and the attempts of his mother, Mai Malwai, to control the administration. He got rid of his Diwan by despatching him on a dangerous expedition to Kaithal, where he was assassinated. Mai Malwai was also murdered 'under mysterious circumstances.' After establishing his complete control over the affairs at home, Ranjit Singh launched his expeditions against the various chiefs of the Sikh confederacies. With the active support of his mother-in-law Rani Sada Kaur, the Kanhaya chief, he fell on the Ramgarhias. This expedition was undertaken to punish the Ramgarhias for their encroachments on the territories of Kanhayas. The Ramgarhias were defeated and their main city Miani was seized. After reducing the powerful Ramgarhias to abject submission, Ranjit Singh turned his attention towards Lahore. Afghan leader, Zaman Shah established his control over Lahore in 1797. But the news of a conspiracy aganist him by his brother in alliance with Shah of Persia forced Zaman Shah to retreat, leaving Lahore under the charge of his governor Shahanchi Khan. The retreat of Zaman Shah gave Ranjit Singh an ideal opportunity to establish his control over Lahore. He in alliance with Sahib Singh of Gujarat and Milkha Singh of Pindiwala, attacked Shahanchi Khan and occupied Lahore in 1799. After Lahore Ranjit Singh annexed Amritsar from the Bhangis along with all their other territories. Master of Lahore and Amritsar. Ranjit Singh, laid the foundation of a sovereign Sikh monarchy in the Punjab, with himself as its undisputed monarch.

With a view to consolidate his position further Ranjit Singh continued his march towards other principalities. He subdued Jammu, seized Mirowal, Narowal, Sialkot, Dilawargarh and Wazirabad, humbled the Kangra chief Sansar Chand and the Pathan chief Nizam-ud-din of Kasur. The Muslim principalities of Kabul monarchy, like Jhang and Sahiwal, made ready submission and the Multan governor Muzaffar Khan greeted Ranjit Singh with huge presents. However, it was not until 1818 that Multan finally surrendered to Misr Dewan Chand, the commander of the Sikh forces. Kashmir was conquered in 1819 and by 1820– Ranjit Singh was acknowledged as the ruler of the whole of the Punjab, from the Sutlej to the Indus, with the territories of Kashmir and the hill tract to the borders of Tibet. The Trans-Indus regions of Dera Ismail, Dera Ghazi Khan, Khairabad and finally Peshawar (1834) were all subjected to the Sikh monarchy. Ranjit Slngh's successors were able to maintain the territorial integrity established by ' Ranjit Singh till 1845 and also added some small territories. But after

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that, in a phased s manner, the Sikh dominion was subjugated to the British imperial system and it was a fully annexed to the British Empire in 1849.

2.14 NATURE OF THE SIKH POLITY

In the previous sections we have discussed the development of the Sikh state and its organizational framework. What was the nature of the Sikh polity? There is no denying the fact that the teachings of the Sikh Gurus provided the basic foundation for the Sikh polity. The movement that had developed amongst the Sikhs to fight against the socio-economic and religious injustices in the medieval period ultimately got transformed into a political movement in the course of the 18th century. So the basis of the Sikh polity was laid down by the moral ethos and the democratic traditions of the Sikh Gurus. The reflection of this democratic tradition is found in the Sikh polity of the *Misl* period with its various features like the *Gurmata*, the *Dal Khalsa*, ruling in the name of the *Khalsa*, etc. It is important to point out here that the historians are not unanimous about the nature of the Sikh polity during the *Misl* period. According to some historians the organization of the *Misls* was 'theocratic' in character; on the other hand, it has also been poidted out that the functioning of the *Misl* Chiefs suggests that they acted independently in their own respective areas, sometimes guided by their own interests. Their attendance in the meetings of the *Sarbat Khalsa* was not compulsory. They attended the meetings to discuss an emergency situation or for matters of mutual interest; decisions were not universally regarded as binding. Moreover, inspite of the framework of a democratic tradition, in the internal organization of the *Misls* there was not such democracy. The idea of personal government was much in practice. There was no doubt a confederacy of the *Misls* but within the *Misl* the Sardar or the chief had complete independence. The confederacy existed mainly because there was external threat. In the sphere of internal affairs the confederacy had no control over the *Misls*. The emergence of Sikh monarchy in place of various independent chiefs brought further change in the nature of Sikh polity. During the 19th century the autonomy of the individual Sardar came to an end and the king became the supreme authority within the state. Ranjit Singh had full faith in the Sikh scriptures and the Sikh religion. But his personal faith never came in the way of his administration. Punjab being a land of the people of diverse ethnic, religious and language groups needed a secular administration and the Sikh rulers acted rightly in order to consolidate their rule in the region. The interference of religion in matters of administration was not expedient.

Check Your Progress 3

1) How the Sikh brotherhood was consolidated from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind. Write in 100 words.

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2) How did the misls come up? What was their role in the 'Sikh polity? Answer in about 100 words.

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3) Discuss the nature of Sikh State.

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2.15 LET US SUM UP

To sum up our look at the polities at Mysore demonstrated how in different ways weakly established or weakening institutions were allowing individuals to play a decisive role at different levels of the polity. In the process, Mysore emerged as a state which was in some respects through the military strength of Haidar and Tipu, able to establish a strong administration to overcome the inherent weakness of their institutional base. This to a certain extent restricted various individuals and forces but by no means finished them. Mysore in the 18th century was a polity consolidated under military might of Haidar and Tipu but under constant pressure from their own inability to evolve durable solutions to the forces which were held in check due to military strength. Hyderabad on the other hand, allowed the vested interests in the administration to consolidate and through patron-client linkages from top to bottom established its polity.

Following the repeated foreign invasions and the revolts of the Sikh chiefs, the Mughal provincial administration broke down in the Punjab. In the prevailing political instability the Sikhs emerged as a political force and established an autonomous state in the Punjab. The leadership given by Ranjit Singh and his statesmanship made a major contribution in this process. There was not much institutional change in the administration compared to the Mughal system and the Sikh rulers adopted a secular approach in administration in order to consolidate their rule.

2.16 KEY WORDS

Portfolio investment: In this unit indicates the diversity of investment made by the merchant capitalists.

Revenue farmers: Individuals to whom agricultural land allotted by a ruler in return of a fixed revenue demanded by the state.

Patron: A person who normally has the capacity to grant favours due to position or influence,' A client is the one who receives these favours and performs some service for the patron.

Khutba: Prayer for the emperor.

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Abwabs: In addition to land revenues the cesses collected from the peasants.

Adi Granth: The religious text of the Sikh Panth.

Dal Khalsa: The combination of the forces of more than one Sardar for any specific purpose which was purely temporary in nature.

Dharmarth: Land grant given to religious and charitable institutions.
Faujdar: The administrative head of a Sarkar under the Mughals.

Gurmata: The unanimous resolution taken by the Sikhs present in the Sarbat Khalsa before the Guru Granth Sahib.

Patwari: The village accountant.

Sarbat Khalsa: The entire body of the Khalsa, the Sikh Panth.

Theocratic: The political system based on religion.

2.17 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) (b) 2) (d) 3) (b) 4) (a)

Check Your Progress 2

1) (c) 2) (d) 3) (b) 4) (b)

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Section 2.12

2) See Section 2.12

3) See Section 2.14

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UNIT 3 ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL POWER

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The history of British domination in India started with the subjugation of Bengal to the British imperialist system. After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand the background of the British conquest of Bengal,
- learn about the transformation of power from the Bengal Nawabs to the British authority, and
- explain the factors that led to this transformation of power and its significance.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit introduces you to the gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the 'British in Bengal' during the period 1757 to 1765. In this Unit an attempt has been made to show that it was mainly the commercial rivalry between the British and the Bengal Nawabs which largely decided the course of events in the 1750s. The personal failure of any Nawab was not an important decisive factor for this development, as some historians have tried to establish. However, the degeneration in the administration that started in the 18th century had no doubt contributed to the final collapse of the independent Bengal polity. Here we have first discussed the background of the British. Conquest of Bengal and the political developments from 1757 to 1765. Then we focus on the explanation for this transformation and the significance of the battle of Plassey and Buxar which were Land marks in the process of British imperialist expansion in India.

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3.2 BENGAL BEFORE THE BRITISH CONQUEST

You have read that the changes in European economy i.e. from feudalism to capitialism and then from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism led to fierce competition among various Eruopean powers to establish colonial empire. In this process of imperialists expansion Bengal became since the 17th century, the hunting ground of the Dutch, the French and the English companies. It was mainly the rich resources and good prospects of trade in Bengal which attracted the various foreign companies. Referring to Bengal Francois Bernier, a traveler who visited India during Aurangzeb's reign wrote:

"The rich exuberance of the country has given rise to a proverb in common use among the Portuguese; English and Dutch that the kingdom of Bengal has a hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure".

In the 18th century exports from Bengal to Europe consisted of raw products, such as, saltpetre, rice, indigo, pepper, sugar, etc. and silk, cotton textiles, handicrafts etc. Bengal goods comprised nearly 60 per cent of British imports from Asia in the early 18th century. Commercial potentiality of Bengal was naturally the chief cause of the interest of the English in this province.

Regular contact of the English with Bengal started in the 1630s. First English company in the east was set up at Balasore in Orissa in 1633, then at Hugli, Kasimbazar, Patna and Dacca. By 1690s the acquisition of the zamindari rights of the three villages of Sutnati, Calcutta and Govindpur and the foundation of Calcutta by the Company completed this process of English commercial settlement in Bengal. The annual investment of the Company in Bengal turned to £ 150,000 in 1680.

Since the 17th century the English East India Company was allowed to trade freely in Bengal, in return the Company had to pay annually Rs.3,000 (£350) to the Mughal emperor. When the Company paid the Mughar Eemperor annually (£350) for free trade in Bengal that time Company's exports from Bengal were worth more than £ 50,000 a year.

The provincial governors were not in favour of such a privilege for the Company because this meant a heavy loss to their exchequer. So there was always pressure from the provincial administration to compel the English Company to pay more for its trade in the province. The English on their part tried to establish its complete control over the trade through various means. Murshid Kuli Khan, who established his independent authority over Bengal, was not in favour of the special privileges enjoyed by the Company-because of the loss that resulted to the treasury. So the tussle between the English commercial interest and the local government in Bengal was already marked before the mid 18th century.

While the rising commercial interest of the English was becoming a serious threat for the Bengal polity, the provincial administration in Bengal itself had certain weaknesses. You have read in Unit 2 of Block I how an independent political authority emerged in Bengal, following the disintegration of the Mughal empire.

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The stability of this regional power was dependent on certain conditions:

- Nawab's rule depended on the support of powerful faction of the local aristocracy.
- He needed the support of Hindu Mutaseddis who were in control of the financial administration.
- The support of the big Zamindars was also very essential because they not only supplied revenues to the treasuary but also helped the Nawabs with their own militia in times of need and by maintaining law and order in their areas.
- The co-operation and support of the bankers and business houses, particularly the house of the Jagat Seths; the largest financial house in Bengal was also needed.

All these different groups had different interests and expectations from the Nawab. The stability of Nawab's regime depended on maintaining proper balance among these various interest groups. The common people had no place in this power equation between the ruler and the interest groups. They were the victims of the growing demands of the Zamindars but there was no protection from the administration. There was no initiative on the part of the rulers to involve the people in the anti-imperialist struggle.

3.3 THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF BENGAL, 1757-65

The history of Bengal from 1757 to 1765 is the history of gradual transfer of power from the Nawabs to the British. During this short period of eight years three Nawabs, Siraj-ud-daula, Mir Jafar and Mir Kasim ruled over Bengal. But they failed to uphold the sovereignty of the Nawab and ultimately the rein of control passed into the hands of the British. We will now discuss the developments in Bengal from 1757 to 1765 and see how the British ultimately got control over Bengal.

3.3.1 Siraj-ud-daula and the British

Siraj-ud-daula succeeded Alivardi Khan as Nawab of Bengal in 1756. The succession bf Siraj was opposed by his aunt Ghasiti Begum and his cousin Shaukat Jang who was the Governor of Purnea. There was a dominant group in the Nawab's court comprising Jagat Seth, Umichand, Raj Ballabh, Rai Durlabh, Mir Jafar and others who were also opposed to Siraj. Besides this internal dissension within the Nawab's court. Another serious threat to Nawab's position was the growing commercial activity of the English Company. The conflict between the Nawab and the English Company over trade privileges was nothing new. But-during Siraj-ud-daula's reign. Certain other factors further strained the relations between the two. They are:

- The fortification around Calcutta by the English Company without the permission of the Nawab.
- The misuse of the Company's trade privilege by its officials for their private trade.
- The English Company at Calcutta had given shelter to Krishna Das, son of Raj Ballabh, who had fled with immense treasures against the

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Nawab's will.

Siraj-ud-daula was unhappy with the Company for these reasons. The Company on its part became worried about Siraj because the Company officials suspected that Siraj would cut down the privilege of the Company in alliance with the French in Bengal. Siraj-ud-daula's attack on the English fort at Calcutta precipitated an open conflict.

The arrival of a strong English force under the command of Robert Clive at Calcutta from Madras strengthened the British position in Bengal. The secret alliance of the Company with the conspirators of the Nawab's camp further strengthened the position of the British. So English victory in the battle field of Plassey, (June, 1757) was decided before the battle was fought. It was not the superiority of the military power but the conspiracy of the Nawab's officials that helped the English in winning the battle. It is very difficult to ascertain why Shiraj failed to take appropriate action. He could not save himself ultimately and was murdered by the order of Mir Jafar's son Miran.

3.3.2 Mir Jafar and the British

Mir Jafar was promised the Nawabship by Clive before the battle of Plassey. This was his reward for his support to the British against Siraj.

The British now became the kingmakers of Bengal. Mir Jafar was made to pay a heavy price to his English friends for their favour. But the treasury of Murshidabad did not have enough resources to satisfy the demands of Clive and his fellow countrymen. Mir Jafar paid out about Rs. 1,750,000 in presents and compensation to the British.

Immediately after his accession Mir Jafar faced some serious internal problems. They were:

- Some of the Zamindars like Raja Ram Sinha of Midnapore, Hizir Ali Khan of Purnea refused to accept him as their ruler.
- Mir Jafar's soldiers who were not getting salary regularly were in a rebellious mood.
- He had doubts about the loyalty of some of his officials, specially of Rai Durlabh. He believed that Rai Durlabh had instigated the rebellion of Zamindar against him. But Rai Durlabh was under the shelter of Clive so he could not touch him.
- There was an attempt by the Mughal Emperor's son who later on became Shah Alam to capture the throne of Bengal.
- The financial position of the Nawab was also weak, mainly because of the demands of the Company and mismanagement of resources. All these made Mir Jafar more dependent on the English Company. But the Company was unhappy with the Nawab for some reasons.
- The English Company was under the impression that Mir Jafar, in collaboration with the Dutch company was trying to curb the growing influence of the English in Bengal.
- Mir Jafar also failed to respond to the ever increasing demands of the English.

Meanwhile the death of Miran, son of Mir Jafar, again created a conflict

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over the question of succession. The fight was between Miran's son and Mir Kasim, the son in-law of Mir Jafar. Vansittart who came as Governor of Calcutta took the side of Mir Kasim, Mir Kasim in a secret agreement with Vansittart agreed to pay the necessary funds to the Company if they support his claim to the Nawabship of Bengal. Mir Jafar had already lost the confidence of the English. The rebellion of Mir Jafar's army for their due salary made it easier for the British to force Mir Jafar to step down.

3.3.3 Mir Kasim and the British

Mir Kasim's accession to the throne of Bengal followed the same way, the way through which Mir Jafar had come to power. Like his predecessor, Mir Kasim also bad to pay large amounts of money to the English. Besides this he had given three districts of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong to the English Company. After assumption of power the two most important things that Mir Kasim did were:

- shifting the capital from Murshidabad to Monghyr in Bihar in order to keep a safe distance from the Company at Calcutta, and
- re-organising the bureaucracy by the men of his own choice and remodelling the army to enhance its skill and efficiency.

The first few months of Mir Kasim's reign went very well. But gradually the relationship with the British became embittered. Reasons for this were:

- Ram Narayan, the Deputy governor of Bihar, was not responding to the repeat, requests by Nawab to submit his accounts. But Ram Narayan was supported by the English officials of Patna who never concealed their anti-nawab feeling.
- The misuse of the Company's Dustak or trade permit by Company officials for their private trade generated tension between the British and the Nawab.

The Company servants wore not paying any duty on their goods. Whereas local merchants had to pay duty. While the Nawab lost tax revenue because of the non-payment of duty by the Company officials die local merchant, faced unequal competition with the Company merchants. Moreover, the Company officials completely, ignoring the officials of the Nawab. They were forcing the local people. to sell their goods at low prices, Mir Kasim complained against these practices to Governor Vansittart, but this had no effect.

As it happened in the case of Mir Jafar, in the case of Mir Kasim also when the British found that Mir Kasim had failed to fulfil their expectation they started searching for a suitable replacement of Mir Kasim. But Mir Kasim was not ready to surrender so easily, unlike his predecessor. He tried to put up a united resistance against the British with the help of the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh.

However, Mir Kasim ultimately failed to protect his throne and the battle of Buxar (1764) completed the victory and the domination of the British in eastern India.

3.3.4 After Mir Kasim

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Mir Jafar was brought back to the throne of Bengal. He agreed to band over three districts-Midnapore, Burdwan and Chittagong to the English for the maintenance of their army and to permit duty free trade in Bengal (except a duty of 2% on salt). But Mir Jafar was in bad health and he died shortly after' this. His minor son Najim-ud-daula was appointed Nawab. The real administration was carried on by a Naib-Subadar, 'who would be appointed or dismissed by the English.

'In the summer of 1765 Clive came back as the Governor of Bengal. Clive now engaged himself in completing his unfinished task, i.e, to make the British the supreme political authority in Bengal. He approached the Mughal emperor Shah Alam who was practically a prisoner of Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Awadh, since. 1761 for an agreement. The emperor responded positively to Clive's proposal. An agreement was signed between Shah Alam and Clive on August 1765. By this agreement Shah Alam was given Allahabad and the adjoining territories, while the emperor granted by a firman, the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to the East India Company. The right of Diwani gave the British complete control over the Bengal revenues or financial administration.

The responsibility for defence, law and order and the administration of justice remained in the hands of the Nawabs, But the Nawabs had virtually lost their military power after the battle of Buxar, So after the grant of Diwani the Nawabs were in reality red iced to a cipher.

The above discussion shows how the political events from 1757 to 65 gradually led to the transfer of power from the Bengal Nawabs to the British East India Company. In the following section we will try to understand the factors that led to this change.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What was the nature of Bengal polity? Write your answer in 100 words.

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2) Why did the relationship become strained between the British and the Bengal Nawabs? Write your answer in 100 words.

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3) Read the following statements and mark– right (✓) or wrong (×).

   i) The Bengal Nawabs did not object, to the free trade of the English Company in Bengal.

   ii) The growing trade of the Company in Bengal, augmented the

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financial resources of the Bengal rulers.

iii) Siraj-ud-daula objected to the misuse of trace privileges m Bengal by the Company officials.

iv) Mir Jafar's army rebelled against him because he failed to pay their salary.

v) The British became critical of Mir Kasim because he wanted to establish his independent authority.

vi) The right of Diwani gave the British complete control over the financial and administrative affairs of Bengal.

3.4 EXPLANATION FOR THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

The above narrative of the political event from 1757 to 1765 shows how the British gradually subdued the Nawab's authority and established their complete control over Bengal. what happened in Bengal in this period has been termed by many historians as a "political revolution". On the question, what were the causes of this revolution; historians opinions are divided, The attempt by some historians to find the cause of the revolution in the personal failures of the Nawabs is not tenable. The arrogance of Siraj or the treachery of Mir Jafar or the individual limitations of Mir Kasim by itself cannot account for the transformation of Bengal's power structure. The issues involved in the conflict between the British and the Nawabs were some thing more significant.

It is argued by some historians that private interests of the East India Company officials provoked the conflicts with the Nawabs. Expectations of more trade privileges and rewards and attempt to make their own fortunes made the individual Englishmen defy the authority of the Nawabs. The misuse of trading privilege by the Company officials for their private trade became the bone of contention between the Nawabs and the East India Company. The firman or the imperial grant given by the Mughal emperor Farukshiyar in 1717 gave duty free concession only to the Company's imports and exports and not to the Company servants' private trade. The misuse of this trade privilege by the Company officials for private trade meant a heavy loss to the Nawabs treasury. Both Siraj-ud-daula and Mir Kasim complained to the Company against this misuse of trade privilege, but there was no change in the situation.

If the private interest of the individual Englishmen was responsible for the conflict with the Nawabs, the Company was also equally responsible for it. The Company was pressurising the Nawabs for greater trading privileges. The British wanted to establish their monopoly control over Bengal trade by driving out the French and the Dutch companies from Bengal. The English Company began to increase its military strength and fortified Calcutta against the wish of the Nawab. This was a direct challenge to the authority of the Nawab. After Plassey, company's pressure for larger subsidies increased and it demanded some Zamindaris from the Nawab to meet the expenses of the Company's troops. More alarming was the Company's involvement in the court polities of Nawab and interference in Nawab's choice of high

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officials. Thus, the growing authority of the Company and its dabbling in local politics seriously challenged the independent position of the Nawabs.

It is not difficult to see that the Company and its officials played a significant role in shaping the events in Bengal between 1757-65. However, no less significant was the role of some of the local merchants, officials and Zamindars in the establishment of the British political supremacy in Bengal. The house of the Jagat Seths, the largest banking house in Bengal, and the wealthy merchants like Umihand were not happy with the accession of Siraj-ud-daula. The Seths were the custodian of the Nawab's treasury and they had a signified control over Nawab's administration. Besides the Seths and other merchants, there was landed and military aristocracy who were a dominant group in the Nawab's court. This group became apprehensive of losing their special privileges which they were enjoying from the earlier Nawabs. Siraj-ud-daula's recorganization of civilian and military administration by replacing old office holders gave ground for their apprehension. The Nawab's patronage to a new elite group represented by Mohanlal, Mir Madan and Khawaja Abdul Hadi Khan alienated the old officials from the Nawab. 'This alienation and the expectation of a better bargain by replacing Siraj-ud-daula with their own man brought the ruling clique into a conspiracy against Siraj-ud-daula.

The British who were in search of an ally for their own ends, found allies in this group. The British wanted to gain more trade privileges and to extract more resources from Bengal, while their Indian collaborators had the desire to establish their own political power in Bengal. Their common objective was to replace the present Nawab by a man of their common choice. Hence the consipiracy made the task easier for the British to establish their control over the Bengal Nawab.

To sum up, the economic interests of the Company and its officials and the growth of factions in the court at Murshidabad and the conflict of interests among different groups in the court were some of the factors which brought about the political transformation of Bengal between 1757 to 1765.

3.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF BRITISH SUCCESS

We have seen in the earlier sections that how decisively the British established their political supremacy in Bengal by winning two battles, one at Plassey (1757) and the other at Buxar (1764). Apart from the overall significance of the British victory the two battles had certain specific significance of their own.

The success of the British in the battle of Plassey had a significant impact in the history of Bengal.

- The victory of the British, whether by treachery or any means, undermined the position of the Nawab in Bengal.
- Apparently there was not much change in the government and the Nawab still remained the supreme authority. But in practice the Nawab became dependent on the Company's authority and the Company began to interfere in the appointment of Nawab's officials.

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- Internal rivalry within the Nawab's administration was exposed and the conspiracy of the rivals with the British ultimately weakened the strength of the administration.
- Besides the financial gain, the English East India Company was also successful in establishing their monopoly over Bengal trade by marginalising the French and the Dutch companies.

The battle of Buxar gave them the complete political control over Bengal. Actually, the process of transition started with the battle of Plassey and culminated in the battle of Buxar.

The battle of Buxar sealed the fate of the Bengal Nawabs and the British emerged as the ruling power in Bengal.

Mir Kasim was successful in forming a confederacy with the Emperor Shah Alam-II and Nawab Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh against the British. This confederacy failed before the British force. The victory of the British in this battle proved the superiority of the British force and strengthened their confidence. This was a victory not against Mir Kasim alone but against the Mughal Emperor and the Nawab of Awadh also. The success of the British in this battle gave a clear indication that the establishment of the British rule in other parts of India was not very far off.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Do you think that the personal failures of the Nawabs led to the political transformation in Bengal? Give your argrument in 100 words.

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2) Write in 60 words about the significance of the battle of Buxar.

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

We have traced in this Unit the process of political-developments that took place in Bengal between 1757 to 1765. We hope you have understood that the primary interest of the British at the initial stage was to tap the resources of Bengal and to monopolize. the commercial potentiality of Bengal in the Asian trade. It was the growing commercial interest of the English East India Company and its officials which brought them indirect confrontation with the Bengal Nawabs. The weaknesses in the prevailing Bengal polity helped the British to win the battle against the Nawabs and the alienation of different groups from the rulers made the system vulnerable to external forces.

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3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Your answer should focus on the dependability of Nawabs on various factions and its limitations, lack of cohesion in the administration etc. See Sec. 8.2

2) Your answer should include the clash of interest between the Nawabs and the British the growing interference of the British in the internal affairs of Bengal polity, etc. See Sec. 8.3

3) i) × ii) × iii) ✓ iv) ✓ v) ✓ vi) ×

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write your answer in the light of interpretations given in Sec. 8.4.

2) Your answer should include the impact of the battle in Bengal and other parts of India, specially how it helped the process of British conquest in India. See Sec. 8.5

ignou THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

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UNIT 4 EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION OF COLONIAL POWER UPTO 1857

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will get to know about:

- the ways in which the British perception of India was being shaped,
- how the British perception about India changed over the years, and
- some reasons as to why the British perception about India changed over the years, and
- how the British Ideas and Ideologies contributed to the consolidation and expansion of the British rule in India.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The mid-18th century saw the transformation of the English East India Company from a trading enterprise to a political power. The English East India Company had remained a commercial body for one and a half centuries. Why did it acquire its political ambitions at this time? The expansion of European production and trade and the emergence of aggressive nation states in Europe lay behind the expansion of the European companies in India from the 1730s. In India, the decline of Mughal authority obviously provided a great opportunity for expansion of influence. The company's need for more revenue from taxation inclined it towards establishing an

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empire. The company needed money to maintain its trade and pay its troops and so acquisition of territory seemed the best method of meeting this requirement. The failure of indigenous rulers was primarily due to their inability to make naval interventions and inefficiency and efficiency of their armies against the better-equipped professional armies of the British. The existing rivalries among the indigenous rulers and the voltaic political situation provided a favourable ground for political intervention and expansion of the British rule. It took a prolonged struggle for territorial expansion and political consolidation of the British. British fought a number of wars to subdue the local rulers. Internal weaknesses of the Indian states decided the final outcome of this struggle for power. However, it is not our aim to give a detailed chronicle, step by step of the piecemeal conquest of India by the British. Instead of a political narration, our focus in this unit would be on emerging imperial ideologies and traditions that helped in shaping the attempt to consolidate and systematize British rule in India. This was much before when a large colonial bureaucracy occupied itself, especially from the 1860s, with classifying people and their attributes, with censuses, surveys, and ethnographies, with recording transactions, marking space, establishing routines, and standardizing practices.

4.2 THE EARLY IMAGES

The very early images of India in the British mind were in terms of their own Western experience and their travels in the great voyages of discovery. The early travellers to India, Edward Terry and John Ovington described, the Mughal rule in 1689 'yet another example of Muslim despotism' The early British, who had read about the Ottoman and Persian empires in the great traveller Bernier's writings seem to have felt that a closer study of the Mughals would tell them very little that they did not know. It was believed by people like Sir William Temple in the classical age, that Lycurgus and Pythogaras had been taught by the Indians. However, the general impression was that in 17th century India tradition of learning no longer remained. Terry argued that the Brahmins who were the ancient repositories of learning had degenerated.

Other signs of this degeneration were detected by the British in their contact with the communities of the West coast of India. It was argued that they were 'industrious, submissive, frugal and cowardly people' who had rigid habits of mind. The caste system was frequently cited as an example of their rigid mind. By and large these images were to persist. However, with the establishment of more permanent stations, the British had to contend with further Indian realities.

4.3 WARREN HASTINGS AND THE BRITISH IMAGE OF INDIA

The prevalent impression that the Indians had degenerated tended to be reinforced by British experience in 18th century India. At the same time the early administrators were keenly aware of India's past glory. To administer this country properly a thorough knowledge of India and its past was needed.

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Warren-Hastings took this mission rather seriously. To fulfill this mission he was aware that he required a band of dedicated administrators, who would rise above the opportunistic fortune hunters who came from Britain to India. For this purpose, he made strenuous efforts to work towards institutions of learning which would first acquire the knowledge of the golden past of India and then, perhaps, convey it to those who could be involved in the project of administering India. This vision, which has sometimes been called the Orientalist vision, was not confined to Warren Hastings alone.

4.3.1 William Jones

William Jones, an English Jurist, was to commit himself to rediscovering India precisely for this reason. Identifying with the Whig tradition of British politics, Jones set himself the task of making India more intelligible to the British. Jones on coming to India realized that to understand India, individual initiative would not be enough. He gradually came around to the view that it would have to be an organized effort to combine scientific study with the labour and knowledge of a group of dedicated individuals. It was thus that the famous Asiatic Society was formed. The Society was to cover the task of unearthing knowledge about Asia both within and outside Asia.

It is here that Jones' efforts and Warren Hastings' vision were to coincide. The Society received full blessings of the Governor-General and an era of studying India from within close quarters of its social, religious, linguistic and political aspects began. This in itself was a departure from the early travellers who would normally record impressions and go away.

The Asiatic Society contributed in a major way by translating from Persian and Sanskrit works of Grammar, Puranas and the writings of Kalidasa. Secondly, the Members of the Asiatic Society researched and published a large number of articles on Indian society and religion. As a result, Jones' contribution through the society was to 'infectiously spread the romantic fascination of India and her culture throughout Europe.'

4.3.2 Hastings in Practice

Hastings on the other hand had more practical reasons for promoting the Asiatic Society. By this time he had decided that the 'dual Government' established by Clive should go and the East India Company should take up the responsibility of Bengal. But he was not in favour of introducing English laws and English ways in India. His main idea was to rule the 'conquered in their own way'. He felt that the rapid growth of the British rule had excited various prejudices. These, he felt, needed to be stilled. Secondly, he wanted to reconcile British rule with the Indian institutions. This inevitably meant more intensive investigation into the 'manners and customs' of the country and an in depth analysis of the literature and laws of the Indians. It is for this purpose that Halhed, one of Hastings' lieutenants, drew up a list of religious and customary laws called the 'Gentoo Laws' which would help in understanding the process of furthering 'the conciliation of natives or ensure stability to the acquisitions'. This, Halhed maintained, would help further in enhancing the prospects of commerce and territorial establishment.

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4.4 INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The early quests of rediscovering the rich Indian past then were slowly being subsumed to the practical needs of the British rule. To enable the practical task of training and the orienting future administrators to the goals of this task, in the tradition of Warren Hastings, Wellesley established the Fort William College at Calcutta in 1800.

The Fort William College basically impressed upon its students to study the Indian language so that the future administrator could take on the task of familiarising themselves with the 'vernacular' of the people and with India's past in a more concrete fashion. For example, studying Persian served very practical ends. Most of the Indian states used Persian as the language for maintaining official record and running the day-to-day business. Thus the vision of learning about India's past glory and the practical needs of the British administration were neatly dovetailed.

One should be careful in not reducing the steps taken to train the future administrators to the visions of the Indian past held by the administrators of the time. The Indian Residents, who were posted at the courts of various submissive lndian rulers, combined both the knowledge and usage of Persian with the cultural life styles of the court. To establish an identity with the Indian courtiers, the British Residents often donned the Indian dresses and maintained huge establishments like the court nobility. He would often adopt the manners and etiquettes of the court, while having a major say in the decisions of the ruler. The Indian rulers then maintained some kind of cultural independence in spite of being politically subservient to the British.

With the consolidation of the conquests and the need to create a more integrated administrative structure, the British had to step in to realms of Indian institutions like law and landed property. In the meanwhile, the industrial revolution in Britain had forced the need of market and raw materials outside Britain for the industrialist on the minds of the policy makers in Britain.

4.5 EVANGELICALISM AND OTHER NEW TRENDS

The new needs of the British necessarily meant that the idea of retaining Indian institutions and laws had to be reviewed. If new products were to enter the market there was a need to create a taste for them. This meant the infusion of a new way of life and culture, at least in the top crust of society.

In the early period of establishing institutions which discovered India's past, a neat compromise, of learning and the needs of the Company commerce and administration had been made. That is; 'learn about the Indian society but do not disturb it'. That this compromise was resented is shown in the struggle of the Sreerampore missionaries, who wanted to get on with the task of 'reforming' the current degeneration of the Indian society. While the Sreerampore missionaries were to do this task quietly, respecting the Indian traditions, the later missionaries

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like Charles Grant were to be openly hostile to 'Indian barbarism'. This hostility, a hallmark of evangelicalism, was combined with the desire to 'civilize' India. Bringing a Chtistian zeal into his mission, Grant was to propagate the policy of assimilation of India into the great civilizing mission of Britain.

This attitude was to go hand in hand with the expression of British liberalism, as for example in Macaulay, the liberal British administrator's task was to 'civilize' rather than subdue. The merchant community supported this, firstly, because since they would benefit from the civilizing mission's laws to acquire property etc. in India, and then, under 'free trade' they could work out the problems of creating a market for British goods amongst the Indians. Charles Grant saw a complementarity between the civilizing process and material prosperity. It was thus that another liberal C.E. Trevelyan, in 1838, was to outline his vision of India as 'the proudest monument of British benevolence'.

Check Your Progress 1

l) How did William Jones differ from the early travellers who wrote about India?

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2) Why did Warren Hastings want to study India's past?

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3) Did the Sreerampore Missionaries and Charles Grant agree with Warren Hastings way of dealing with India?

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4.5.1 The Battle for Improvement

The 'idea of improvement' was to take shape in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a part of the vision of Britain as a promoter of prosperity and civilization. It was thus, that Cornwallis agreed to settling the revenue permanently on the landed class (Zamindars) in Bengal. Cornwallis's assumption was that since the main source of wealth was agriculture, the 'magic touch of property' will create capital and market in land. A more prosperous landed class with fixed obligation to the state and an English rule of law would create new men of enterprise in land who would also take trade forward. John Shore, who had seen

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the idea of Permanent Settlement grow and had more experience of the countryside, while agreeing with Cornwallis's vision of improvement, suggested that the improvement should be brought about by slow degrees by experimentally introducing innovations.

4.5.2 Preservation and Munro

Among the critics of Cornwallis were Munro in the South along with his famous colleagues like Malcolm and Metcalfe. They found the Cornwallis System as **having** no regard for Indian history or experience. They opposed the very idea that a political society could be built on principles derived from an alien English tradition. It was for this reason that they opposed Cornwallis's import of the English rule of law with its strict division of judiciary and executive powers of the government. To Munro, politics was both experimental and pragmatic. The brief period the British had spent in India, he thought, was too short for any permanent solutions. It was thus he argued for periodic revision of the rate of ryotwari. (See unit 6 for details) He, therefore, argued that the basis of India's stable heritage, the village communities should be conserved. And any law and order problem should be met with a system where the judiciary and executive were fused together. This he felt would enable the preservation of justice to the peasantry as well as the aims of the British rule. In line with this idea' of preserving the varying heritage of India, Munro and his colleagues opposed a centrally imposed rule in India and 'favoured diversity in the Indian government'.

The task 'of transforming the Indian mind was then to become more complex. The task of education in the process was mooted by the liberal Macaulay as a prime responsibility of the British in India. But in the context of both the resistance of Orientalists, and pragmatic Anglo-Indians like Munro wanted to preserve the Indian institutions and culture the role of a western or an Anglicist education became a subject of immense controversy in the middle of the 19th century.

4.6 THE UTILITARIANS

The Utilitarians were not to take the liberal detour to education for the task of 'civilizing' and 'improving' India. They went back to the basic question of reform of law and landed property to create conditions where the market could flourish. They believed, under the guidance of Jeremy Bentham, that, a scientific and logical approach to these two problems of law and landed property could create reforms which would satisfy the principle of 'the greatest good of the greatest number'.

4.6.1 The Question of Law

The utilitarian ideas were to have a fundamental influence in moulding the British attitudes towards India. The question of law as an instrument of change was mooted under Bentinck. It was possible, he believed, for judiciary or I.aw to be the instrument of changing Indian practices like Sati and female infanticide.

LETTER 222

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222. *Bentinck's reply to the petition on* sati

14July 1830

The governor-general has read with attention the petition which has been presented to him: and has some satisfaction in observing that the opinions of the pandits consulted by the petitioners confirm the sup position that widows are not, by the religious writings of the Hindus, commanded to destroy themselves; but that, upon the death of their husbands the choice of a life of strict and severe morality is everywhere expressly offered: that in the books usually considered of the highest authority it is commanded above every other course; and is stated to be adapted to a better state of society; such as, by the Hindus, is believed to have subsisted in former times.

Thus, none of the Hindus are placed in the distressing situation of having to disobey either the ordinances of the government or those of their religion. By a virtuous life a Hindu widow not only complies at once with the laws of the government and with the purest precepts of her own religion, but affords an example to the existing generation of that good conduct which is supposed to have distinguished the earlier and better times of the Hindu people.

The petitioners cannot require the assurance that the British government will continue to allow the most complete toleration in matters of religious belief; and that to the full extent of what it is possible to reconcile with reason and with natural justice they will be undisturbed in the observance of their established usages. But, some of these, which the governor-general is unwilling to recall into notice, his predecessor in council, for the security of human life, and the preservation of social order, have, at different times, found it necessary to prohibit. If there is anyone which the common voice of all mankind would except from indulgence it is surely that by which the hand of a son is made the instrument of a terrible death to the mother who has borne him, and from whose heart he has drawn the sustenance of his helpless infancy.

The governor-general has given an attentive consideration to all that has been urged by the numerous and respectable body of petitioners: and has thought fit to make this further statement, in addition to what had been before expressed as the reasons, which, in his mind, have made it an urgent duty of the British government to prevent the usage in support of which the petition has been preferred: but if the petitioners, should still be of opinion that the late regulation is not in conformity with the enactments of the imperial parliament, they have an appeal 'to the king in council, which the governor-general shall be most happy to forward.

With the coming of James Mill to the East India Company's London office, a systematic utilitarian attempt was made to combat the Orientalist, Cornwallis and the Munro heritage. A total vision of political reform on the philosophical premises of utilitarianism was sought to be given a concrete shape. We see a series of laws and penal codes enacted under the Benthamite principle of a centrally logically and coherently evolved

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system which would go down to the grassroots. In the process it would give the direction to the Indian government to function 'with a united purpose.'

4.6.2 The Question of Land Revenue

Mill also supported a restructuring of the land revenue policy in a manner that would be consistent with utilitarian economics. While, on the one hand this meant a direct contact with the mass of cultivators as in Munro's ryotwari settlement (see Unit 6), on the other hand this meant taxing the landlord along Ricardo's philosophy. This taxation would be in such a manner that the landlord would not enjoy undue benefit at the cost of manufacture and trade just by virtue of ownership of land. This meant that landholder would give to the state as tax on land revenue a certain proportion of the net produce (i.e. the gross produce minus cost of cultivation).

This doctrine of rent was sought to be put into practice by officers like Pringle in Bombay. Elaborate survey methods were used to calculate the 'net produce' from land. Then tax rates were assessed. However, in practise the revenue demand often went very high, sometimes as much as fifty to sixty percent of the produce. This led gradually to the abandonment of complex calculations based on the rent doctrine. From 1840s purely pragmatic and empirical methods derived from the tradition of taxation in respective areas were beginning to be adopted.

But, the rent doctrine of the, utilitarian philosophy was not given up in theory. In spite of the purely pragmatic and empirical calculation of rent, the justification of rent theory for the calculation was still given. The justification of the theory though did have practical reasons as over the next decades the idea of defining rights and obligations of the taxpaying cultivators permanently was relegated to the background. But then the scientific calculations of the utilitarianism were again paradoxically submitted to Munro like consideration of lndian heritage and traditions.

4.6.3 The Emerging Vision of the Empire

There was a streak of authoritarianism in English utilitarian thought which developed abroad into fullfledged despotism. Utilitarianism in India despite being born in the tradition of liberalism could never accept a democratic government in India. James Mill consistently opposed any form of representative government in lndia, then or in near future.

The consolidation of the empire under Dalhousie was to take the paradoxes of the various kinds of perceptions of British India still more forward. Dalhousie took forward Mill's vision of belligerent advancement of Britain's mission, in his policy towards the native Indian States. Again, in the true Benthamite tradition he created 'all lndia' departments with single heads for Post and Telegraph Services, the Public Work Department, etc. He was thus to give fruition to the idea of efficient administration within the framework of a unitary all India empire. This latter was in direct contrast to Munro's vision of India as loose federation of regional entities.

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At the same time Dalhousie was prepared to take a liberal stance in some respects. For example, he was to encourage the development of his legislative council into a forum for the representation of non-official opinion. He also provided it with elaborate rules of procedure taken from the English Parliament. He even favoured the admission of Indian members into the legislative council. He agreed with the Macaulay's view of diffusion of English education and along with his colleague Thomason encouraged a system of vernacular education at mass level.

However this impulse to link the task of changing the Indian society to the tasks of law, landed property or education gradually declined. With the consolidation of law codes revenue administration and education and the all India Empire, the focus shifted to efficiency of governance. Pragmatism with rationality and efficiency now dominated the British administration. Utilitarian arguments were still used for governance, for example in the change of law codes under Macaulay. But the overall spirit of reform declined.

The later British administrators of our period were to emphasise that the British rule ad always been governed by law. However, it was argued then, for efficient administration force had to be used and there was no need to justify it by consideration of political change or reform. The utilitarian task of transforming India then was subsumed under the principle of an efficient and good government held up by the 'steel frame' of British administration.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Why was Munro critical of Cornwallis?

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2) How did Bentinck want to bring about a social change in India?

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3) Was James Mill in favour of a democracy in India?

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4) How did the Utilitarians try to solve the problem of land-revenue?

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5) Did Dalhousie want to retain the indigenous states?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

Each regime needs a rationale. We saw in this Unit that, in the era of her expansion in India Britain found hers in a 'civilizing mission'. On

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the one hand, it served to glorify rather sordid history of greed and aggression and plunder. On the other· hand, it instilled in all manner of men a greater sense of purpose. This purpose was not the same to all men. As we have seen, Orientalists like William Jones, Evangelists like Charles Grant, Utilitarians like James Mill, and again a Munro or a Dalhousie had quite different purposes in mind. There were also substantial differences between the modes of thinking in the Orientalist construction of India, or the Evangelical drive to save 'native' souls, or the Utilitarian calculus of the 'greatest goods' in terms of moral and material improvement. Yet, in this diversity of ideas an over-arching conception of Britain's 'mission' in India provided unity in action. Objectively these ideas and men all served to build the British Empire in India.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Evangelicalism: A Protestant Christian movement in England of 18th century, which in contrast to the orthodox church emphasized on personal experiences, individual reading of gospel rather than the traditions of established church.

Paradox: Self contradictory statement, belief etc.

4.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sub-sec. 4.3.1
2) See Sec. 4.3., Sub-sec. 4.3.2
3) See Sec. 4.5

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-sec. 4.5.2
2) See Sub-sec. 4.6.1
3) See Sub-sec. 4.6.3
4) See Sub-section 4.6.2
5) See Sub-section 4.6.3

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UNIT 5 REVOLT OF 1857

Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In the earlier Units you have already been familiarised with the various aspects relating to Imperialism and CoIoniaIism. You are aware that during the period of its rule over the country the East India Company expIoited and harassed the Indian people. Although various sections of Indian people defied the English supremacy at different times, it was the great uprising of 1857, often termed as the First War of Independence, that posed a serious challenge to the English supremacy at an all India level. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- trace the causes of the uprising of 1857,
- know about the various events and conflicts and about the role of various sections of people as well as their leaders,
- determine the reasons for the failure of the revolt,

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- understand its impact and form an opinion about the nature of the revolt,
- the progress of the revolt between May and June'57 and the months thereafter,
- the intensity of the revolt even after the fall of Delhi in September 1857,
- the institutions that the rebels evolved,
- the efforts that went into its suppression,
- the post'1857 restructuring of agrarian relations, and
- colonial policy towards' princes and Muslims.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The revolt of 1857 forms one of the most important chapters in the history of the struggle of the Indian people for liberation from the British rule. It shook the foundations of the British empire in India and at some points it seemed as though the British rule would end for all time to come. What started merely as a sepoy mutiny soon engulfed the peasantry and other civilian population over wide areas in northern India. The upsurge was so widespread that some of the contemporary observers called it - a - "national revolt". The hatred of the people for the ferangis was intense and bitter. Between May and June 1857 it was only some beleaguered cities like Agra, Lucknow, Allahabad and Benares that kept alive evidence of British presence in north India. By then the revolt had spread to Awadh, Rohilkhand, Bundelkhand, Bihar and many parts of central India. This Unit introduces you to the pattern of the progress of the revolt, its manifestations not only in terms of the destruction of symbols of colonial authority but rebel institutions that followed the outbreak.

5.2 CAUSES OF 1857

How did the Revolt break out? What were its causes? The main reason of this was the ruthless exploitation of the Indian people by the British. The British rule which was formally established after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 in Bengal, strove to fill the coffers of the East India Company at the expense of the Indians. The East lndia Company was governed by greedy merchants and traders who could go to any extent to enrich themselves.

5.2.1 Exploitation of the Peasantry

Although the trade monopoly enriched the East India Company considerably, its main source of income was now derived from the land. After entrenching itself in Bengal, it spread its power in India through wars and treaties. To extract as much money as possible it devised new systems of land settlements– Permanent, Ryotwari and Mahalwari– each more oppressive than the other. The Permanent Settlement which was effective in Bengal Presidency and in large parts of north India did not recognize the hereditary rights of the peasants on land, which they had earlier enjoyed. The loyal zamindars and revenue-collectors were now given the propietory rights on

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land. The cultivators were reduced to the status of simple tenants. But even the newly created landlords were not given absolute rights. Their situation was also deliberately left very precarious. They had to pay to the Company 10/11th of the entire rent derived from the cultivators and if they failed to do so. their property was sold to others. The other land settlements were no better. In all of these the peasants had to pay beyond their means and any adverse natural shifts like droughts or flood compelled them to go for loans to the money lenders who charged exorbitant interest. This made the peasants so heavily indebted that they were ultimately forced to sell their land to these money lenders. It is because of this that the money lenders were so hated in rural society. The peasantry was also oppressed by petty officials in administration who extracted money on the slightest pretexts. If the peasants went to the law court to seek redress of their grievances, they were bound to be totally ruined. When the crop was good the peasants had to pay back their past debts; if it was bad, they were further indebted. This nexus between the lower officials, law courts and money lenders created a vicious circle which made the peasantry desparate and ready to welcome any opportunity for change of regime.

5.2.2 Annexation of Princely States

The East India Company did not spare even its former allies. The native state of Awadh was annexed by Dalhousie in 1856 on the pretext that Nawab Wazid Ali Shah was mismanaging the state. Even before this he had annexed Satara in 1848 and Nagpur and Jhansi in 1854 on the pretext that the rulers of these states had no natural heir to succeed them after their death. These annexations embittered the rulers of these states, making Rani of Jhansi and Begums of Awadh staunch enemies of the British. Further the British refusal to pay pension to Nana Sahib, the adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao-II worsened the situation. The annexation of Awadh was also resented by the sepoys as most of whom came from there.This action hurt their patriotic loyalty and sense of dignity. Moreover, since their relatives had now to pay more taxes on land, it adversely affected the purses of the sepoys themselves.

5.2.3 The Alien Rule

Another important reason of the unpopularity of the British was the alien nature of their rule. They never mixed with the Indian people and treated even the upper class Indians with contempt. They had not come to settle in India but only to take money home. So the Indians could never develop any affinity towards them.

5.2.4 Impact on the Sepoys

The revolt of 1857 originated with the mutiny of the Sepoys. These Sepoys were drawn mainly from the peasant population of North and North-West India. As we have seen, the rapacious policies followed by the East India Company were impoverishing and ruining the peasantry. This must have affected the Sepoys also. Infact, most of them had joined the military service in order to supplement their fast declining agricultural income. But as the years passed, they realized that their capacity for doing so declined. They were paid a monthly salary of 7 to 9 Rupees out of which they had to pay for their food, uniform and transport of their private baggage. The cost of

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maintaining an Indian Sepoy was only one-third of his British counterpart in India. Moreover, the Indian Sepoy was treated roughly by the British officers. They were frequently abused and humiliated. The Indian Sepoy, despite his valour and great fighting capacity could never rise above the rank of a Subedar while a fresh recruit from England was often appointed his superior overnight.

5.2.5 Threat to Religion

Apart from degrading service conditions, another factor inflamed the feelings of the sepoys. An impression was created among them that their religion was being attacked by the British. This belief was also shared by the general civilian population. The proselytizing zeal of the missionaries and some of the British officials instilled fear in the minds of the people that their religion was in danger. At several places conversions to Christianity were reported to be made. The Government maintained the chaplains at its own cost and in some cases also provided police protection to the missionaries. Even the army maintained chaplains at state cost and Christian propaganda was carried among the sepoys. Furthermore, the sepoys were forbidden to wear their caste marks, and in 1856 an Act was passed under which every new recruit had to qive an undertaking to serve overseas, if required. The conservative beliefs of the sepoys were thus shaken and they sometimes reacted strongly. For example in 1824, the 47th Regiment of sepoys at Barrackpore refused to go to Burma by sea-route because their religion forbade them to cross "black water". The British reacted ruthlessly, disbanded the Regiment, and put some of its leaders to death. In 1844, seven battalions revolted on the question of salaries and batta (allowance). Even during the Afghan War from 1839 to 1842 the soldiers were almost on the verge of revolt The Revolt of 1857 like sepoys, the people of India had also risen in revolt against the oppressive British rule. The most important of these uprisings were the Kutcha rebellion (1816-32), the Kol uprising in 1831 and the Santhal uprising in 1855-56. The main point with regard to the 1857challenge, however, was that both the military and civilian revolts merged and this made it really formidable.

5.2.6 The Immediate Cause

The atmosphere was so surcharged that even a small issue could lead to revolt. The episode of greased cartridges, however, was a big enough issue to start the rebellion on its own. Dry tinder-box was there and only a spark was needed to set it ablaze. Cartridges of the new Enfield rifle which had recently been introduced in the army had a greased paper cover whose end had to be bitten off-before the cartridge was loaded into rifle. The grease was in some instances made of beef and pig fat. This completely enraged the Hindu and Muslim sepoys and made them believe that the government was deliberately trying to destroy their religion. It was the immediate cause of the revolt.

5.3 EMERGENCE OF THE REVOLT

On 29th March, 1857, a young soldier, Mangal Pandey, stationed at Barrackpore, revolted single-handedly attacking his British officers. He

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was hanged, and not much notice was taken of this event. But it showed the resentment and anger aroused among the sepoys. Less than a month later, on 24th April, ninety men of the Third Native Cavalary, stationed at Meerut, refused to use the greased cartridges. Eighty-five of them were dismissed and sentenced to ten years imprisonment on 9th May. The rest of. the Indian sepoys reacted strongly to this, and the next day, on 10th May, the entire Indian garrison revolted. After freeing their comrades and killing the British officers, they decided to march on to Delhi. This shows that they did have in mind some sort of alternative to the British. Another thing which makes it clear that it was not merely army mutiny was that the people from surrounding areas began to loot the military bazaars and attacked and burnt the bungalows of the British as soon as they heard the shots fired by the sepoys on their officers. The Gujars from the surrounding villages poured into the city and joined the revolt. Telegraph wires were cut and horsemen with warning messages to Delhi were intercepted. As soon as thc sepoys from Meerut reached Delhi, the Indian garrison also rcvolted and joined the rebels. They now proclaimed the old Bahadur Shah, as the Emperor of India.Thus in twenty-four hours. what began as a simple mutiny had swelled into full-scale political rebellion. In the next one month thc entire Bengal Army rose in revolt. Whole of North and North West India was up in arms against the British. In Aligarh, Mainpuri, Bulandshahr, Etwah, Mathura. Agra, Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras, Shahabad, Danapur and East of Punjab, wherever there were Indian troops, they revolted. With the revolt in army, the police and local administration also collapsed. These revolts were also immediately followed by a rebellion in the city and countryside. But in several places the people rose in revolt even before the sepoys. Wherever revolt broke out, the government treasury was plundered, the magazine sacked, bar'racks and court houses were burnt and prison gates flung open. In the countryside, the peasants and dispossessed zamindars attacked the money lenders and new zamindars who had displaced them from the land. They destroyed the government records and money lenders' account books. They attacked the British established law courts, revenue offices, revenue records and thanas (police stations). Thus the rebels tried to destroy all the symbols of colonial power. Even when the people of particular areas did not rise in revolt. They offered their help and sympathies to the rebels. It was said that the rebellious sepoys did not have to carry food with them as they were fed by the villagers. On the other hand, their hostility to the British forces was pronounced. They refused to give them any help or information and on many occasions they misled the British troops by giving wrong information. In central India also, where the rulers remained loyal to the British, the army revolted and joined the rebels. Thousands of Indore's troops joined in Indore the rebellious sepoys. Similarly, over 20,000 of Gwalior's troops went over to Tantya Tope and Rani of Jhansi. In the whole of north and central India the British power was limited only to the towns of Agra, and Lucknow. Elsewhere the entire British army and administration fell like a house of cards. One of the most remarkable thing about the rebellion was its solid Hindu-Muslim unity. The Hindu sepoys of Meerut and Delhi, unanimously proclaimed Bahadur Shah as their Emperor. All the sepoys, whether Hindu or Muslim. accepted the suzeranity of the Emperor and gave the call "chalo Delhi" (onward to Delhi) after their revolt. w-Hindus and Muslims fought

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together and died together. Wherever the sepoys reached, cow-slaughter was banned as a mark of respect to the sentiments of the Hindus.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How and by which sections was the Peasantry exploited? Write in 100 words.

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2) Read the following statements and mark them right (✓) or wrong (×).

   i) The Peasants joined the zamindars in fighting the British.

   ii) The Sepoys perceived a threat to their religion by the British rule.

   iii) The middle and upper class Indians were the beneficiaries of British rule.

   iv) The exploitation of the most sections of the Indians was the long standing reason but the episode of greased cartridges provided the immediate reason for the revolt to break out.

3) Write in about fifty words when, where and how the uprising started.

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5.4 COURSE OF THE REVOLT

In 1857 there were some 45,000 European and some 232,000 regular troops in India.

The bulk of European units were concentrated as an army of occupation in the recently conquered Punjab. Thus between Calcutta and Delhi there were only 5 European regiments. On May 11 the Meerut Mutineers crossed over to Delhi and appealed to Bahadur Shah 11, the pensioner Mughal emperor to lead them and proclaimed him Shahenshah-Hindustan. By the first week of June mutinies had broken out in Aligarh, Mainpuri, Bulandshahr, Etawah, Mathura, Lucknow, Bareilly, Kanpur, Jhansi, Nimach, Moradabad, Saharanpur etc. By mid-June and September 1857 there had been mutinies in Gwalior, Mhow and Sialkot and in Bihar, in Danapur, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Bhagalpur, and Nagode and Jabalpur in central India.

By September-October it was clear that the revolt would not spill across the Narmada. North of the Narmada the main axis of the revolt was represented by the river Ganga and the Grand Trunk Road between Delhi and Patna.

5.4.1 Revolt of the Army

It is important to note that a mere chronology of the mutinies conceals their pattern of diffusion. The mutinies travelled down the Ganga from Meerut and Delhi with a time gap between the various stations required for news to

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travel from one place to another. There were rumours that 30th May 1857 was the day fixed for a total destruction of white men all over north India. Just as news of the fall of Delhi had precipitated the revolt of the army and civil population, the fall of Lucknow in end of May set off uprisings in the district stations of 'Awadh. There is evidence of a certain element of coordination and communication (response to pre-appointed signals etc.) among the mutinous regiments and in their actions though the coordinators themselves remained anonymous. The transmission of rumours (about rebel and British activity) and panic (about religion), which acted as springboards of action was facilitated by the fact that many soldiers were recruited from the same region. Awadh. The pattern of the mutinies was the destruction of houses used or lived in by the British and the government treasures and jails. In Awadh the sepoys claimed that Telinga Rai (sepoy Raj - see Key Words) had arrived.

5.4.2 Revolt of the People

Chapatis were passed from village to village during the winter of 1856-57; it had different meanings for different people. Though by no means a cause of the disturbance, it was perceived as a message of an imminent holocaust. Rumours of greased cartridges, flour polluted with bone, and forcible conversion to Christianity transformed popular grievances against the British into a revolt.

In several places people collected, conferred and planned their attack on government and bahia property. People of neighbouring villages, after connected by kinship and caste ties, got together to make such attacks. Sadar stations were often attacked by people from anything between 30 to 60 villages. The pattern of attack was the same everywhere. Scores were settled with tax collectors, court officials, policemen and banias. Treasuries were looted, prisoners set free and bungalows set on fire. Clearly the rebels gave priority to political considerations and did not hesitate to destroy economic resources. For example, the coal mines in Kotah were damaged, canal Pock were destroyed to prevent a British battalion reaching Bulandshahr by boat. Similarly numerous attacks were also made on railways and factories by the United Provinces' rural poor who were dependent on them for their livelihood. In the course of the suppression of the revolt what struck the British was the remarkable solidarity among rebels. Most often pecuniary rewards could not induce betrayal, nor could they play off Hindu against Muslims.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Comment briefly on the geographical extent of the revolt of 1857. (Answer in 5 lines.)

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2) Mark the main rebel centres on a map of India.

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5.5 REBEL INSTITUTIONS

That the revolt of 1857 went beyond overthrowing the British is borne out by the Organizational efforts of the rebels:

- immediately after the capture of Delhi, a letter was sent to rulers of all the neighbouring states of present day Rajasthan soliciting their support,
- in Delhi, a court of administrators was set up. Of the 10 members 6 were from the army and four from other departments. Decisions were taken by majority vote.

Such attempts at organization were made at other centres too. We have supportive details from Awadh where Birjis Qadar, a minor, was crowned price by consensus, immediately after the British & feat at the battle of Chinhat on 30th June 1857. The rebels laid down conditions such as:

- orders from Delhi were to be obeyed,
- the wazir would be selected by the army, and
- officers of the army would be appointed after the consent of the army.

The Awadh rebel executive structure comprised two separate decision-making bodies:

- one consisting of bureaucrats and court officials to see to organization and payments, and
- the 'military cell' composed of sepoys or rebel soldiers and a few court officials.

It is significant that at this early stage of the revolt, around July 1857, there was no talukdar in any important decision-making body. In fact orders-were issued to talukdars and zamindars, with promises of land or revenue, asking them to join the revolt to end British rule.

Notwithstanding occasional divisions in the rebel ranks, as for example between the followers of Birjis Qadar and Maulvi Ahmadullah in Awadh, it is the efforts to maintain a semblance of organization that is remarkable. Guidelines were laid down for sepoys and commanders for their operations. Efforts were made for the regular payment of rebel troops either by the conversion of ornaments into coins or granting remission of revenue to talukdars them pay the troops.

5.6 SUPPRESSION AND REPRESSION OF THE COLONIAL STATE

Isolated outbreaks that had occurred in as distant places as Peshawar, Singapore, Kolhapur, Chittagong and Madras were put down with ease. By early July with the core area of the revolt emerging clearly, the British

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moved into mop it up. About 39,000 troops were shipped, on request from London for the suppression operation. By the end of November, 37 troopships crammed the Hugli.

By mid-August the mutineers were driven out of Arrah, Gaya, and Hazaribagh in Bihar. Delhi fell on 21st September after an attack with heavy casualties. Thereafter many rebels shifted to Lucknow. In Awadh, Lucknow was the chief focus of fighting. Rebels were supplied with ammunition from the districts and a workshop was set up in Faizabad to repair heavy guns. Many talukdars fought personally. According to one estimate 100,000 of the 150,000 who died in Awadh were civilians. After the fall of Lucknow in March 1858, the rebels dispersed into the countryside and enclaves of resistance emerged to the south and south-east and the west and north-west of Lucknow. Till September-October 1858 the rebels believed that one combined, well planned attack could still dislodge the British from Awadh and tried to coordinate campaigns in this direction.

- Prominent among the leaders of the revolt were the Rani of Jhansi who died fighting in June 1858,
- Nana Saheb, the adopted son of the last Peshwa, Baji Rao 11, who led the mutiny at Kanpur and escaped to Nepal in the beginning of 1859,
- Kuwaer Singh of Arrah who had carved a base of himself in Azarngarh and Ghazipur and died fighting in May 1858.
- Begum Hazrat Mahal who escaped to Nepal,
- Maulvi Ahmadullah who carried on the revolt around the borders of Awadh and Rohilkhand till his death in June 1858, and
- Tantia Tope, uprooted from his base on the Jumna at Kalpi, reached Gwalior in June 1858, crossed the Narmada in October and was captured and put to death in 1859.

For more than a year the rebels had struggled with limited supply of arms and ammunitions and a poor system of communication. Many sepoys were amazed at the resources of the British and had expected that the British would need French help to put them down. On their part, the British surrounded Awadh, tackled Delhi and the Jumuna area, and then concentrated on Awadh.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Give two examples of rebel institutions with brief details.

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2) To what extent does the defence of Lucknow indicate the intensity of the revolt? Answer in 50 words.

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5.7 AFTERMATH OF THE REVOLT

The suppression of the revolt of 1857 was accomplished by a two pronged approach of military strategy and the submission of talukdars. The reassertion

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of British control was thereafter reinforced with princely support based on an assurance of non-interference in adoption question.

5.7.1 Landlords

In the North-Western Provinces the British made widespread confiscation and redistribution of land. Some incomplete figures show that land assessed at Rs. 17 lakhs was confiscated and land assessed at Rs. 9 lakhs was given in reward. In making land rewards it was the larger landholders who were preferred.

After the fall of Lucknow a proclamation was issued confiscating proprietary right in land in the whole of Awadh except six specific estates. Some 22,658 out of 23,543 villages were restored to talukdars in return for submission and loyalty in the form of collection and transmission and loyalty in the form of collection and transmission of information.

Village proprietors in Awadh were to remain under-proprietors or tenants-at-will. There was, however, fierce opposition to the talukdari settlement among the villagers in several Awadh districts in 1859-60. Faced with agrarian strife the government had to limit the rental demand of the talukdars against inferior holders to a fixed amount (1866). It was also decided that underproprietary rights enjoyed at any time during 12 years prior to annexation were to be protected.

5.7.2 Princes

It may be recalled that the British policy of annexing states had been one of the many accumulating grievances as is evident both from the leadership provided to the rebels by the Rani of Jhansi, Nana Saheb and Begum Hazarat Mahal, and the proclamations of the rebels.

At one point during the revolt Canning had observed that had it not been for the 'patches of native government' like Gwalior, Hyderabad. Patiala, Rampur and Rewa serving as 'break-waters to the storm of 1857' the British would have been swept away.

Therefore, the Queen's proclamation of 1858 declared that the British had no desire to extend their existing territorial possessions. To perpetuate dynasties Canning dispensed with the doctrine of lapse and allowed all rulers the right of adoption. Territorial and monetary awards were bestowed on princes who had remained loyal i.e. those of Gwalior, Rampur, Patiala and Jind.

In 1861 a special order of knighthood, the star of India, was instituted, of which the recipients were the rulers of Baroda, Bhopal, Gwalior, Patiala and Rampur.

However, if the princes were given security from annexation it was made clear that in the event of 'misgovernment' or 'anarchy' the British would step in to take temporary charge of a native state.

5.7.3 The Army

A despatch from Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India to Canning in 1861 sums up the thrust of British policy towards the army in the post-mutiny years. 'If one regiment mutinies I should like to have the next regiment so alien that it would be ready to fire into it.'

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Soldiers from Awadh, Bihar and Central India were declared to be non-martial and their recruitment cut down considerably.

Sikhs, Gurkhas and Pathans who assisted in the suppression of the revolt were declared to be martial and were recruited in large numbers.

Briefly, community, caste, tribal and regional loyalties were encouraged so as to obstruct the forging of the solidarity that was evident among the sepoys from Awadh in 1857.

5.7.4 British Policy After the Revolt

In 1858, as a consequence of the revolt of 1857, a Government of India Act abolished the East India Company. India was to be governed directly in the name of the Crown of England. The November 1858 royal proclamation gave out:

- that those who laid down arms by 2 January, 1859 would be pardoned except those directly involved in the murder of British subjects,
- that official service would be open to all, and
- due regard would be given to ancient usages and customs of India.

To the British, the appeal to Bahadur Shah-II to head the revolt was confirmation of the theory of a Muslim plot to restore the Mughal regime at Delhi. This belief in official circles in fact explains the official attitude towards the community in the post-revolt years.

So marked was the anti-Muslim attitude that Saiyid Ahmad Khan felt the need to - write a pamphlet titled 'who were the Loyal Musalmans?' In that he quoted numerous instances of Muslim collaboration with the British.

Check Your Progress 4

1) How did the British tackle the landlords rebels? Answer in 5 lines.

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2) Comment on the change in British policy towards the native states after the revolt. Answer in 50 words.

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3) Explain British attitudes towards the Muslims after the revolt. Answer in 50 words.

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5.8 LET US SUM UP

This Unit tried to establish that–

- the core area of the revolt was to the north of the Narmada,
- there was a pattern in the diffusion of the revolt down the Ganga,

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- the pattern of revolt in the army and of the people,
- all was not chaos when the rebels took over, and
- it took the British a year to suppress the revolt.

The events of 1857, which we have discussed in the Unit are important not only because they represented the crystallization of popular feelings against the alien rule but also because of the many changes that they produced in the country. These changes pertained not only to the policy formulation and the political structure but also to popular beliefs, ideas, and attitude regarding the nature of British rule. The invincibility of the British rule was shattered once for all and the stage was set for an organized and long drawn out struggle against the alien rule. This led to the beginning of the National Movement which ultimately, ended the foreign rule and brought independence to the country in 1947. After 1858 the British saw themselves with a 'halo of permanence', ruling with the strength of having overcome a revolt of the dimensions discussed above.

5.9 KEY WORDS

Bania : Money-lender.

Ilaqa : Area of land.

Lineage : Ancestral.

Pattidar : Joint ownership of village.

Talukdar : Holder of a taluk (estate in which the holder is responsible for revenue collection from a number of dependent villages).

Telinga Raj : originates from the practice of calling sepoys Telingas from the time Clive brought Telugu speaking sepoys from Madras in 1756-57.

5.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sub. sec. 5.2.1
2) (i) × (ii) ✓ (iii) × (iv) ✓
3) See Sec. 5.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 5.3
2) In an outline Map of India mark the places

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Sec. 5.5
2) See Sec. 5.6

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Sub-sec. 5.7.1
2) See Sub-sec. 5.7.2
3) See Sub-scc. 5.7.4

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UNIT 6 COLONIAL ECONOMY: AGRICULUTRE

Structure

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit analyses the commercialization of agriculture in India during the early phases of British rule-that is, up to the middle of the 19th century. The process of commercialization that began under the British had far-reaching effects on Indian life, and many of the problems that arose then, are still with us today. After studying this Unit, you will learn about:

- the meaning of the term ‘commercialization’;
- the different ways in which the new commercial agriculture was organized; and

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- the effects of this process on the Indian economy, and on the Indian farmers.

In this Unit we shall also study the land revenue settlements made by the British in different parts of India of India up to 1857. After studying this Unit you will be able to understand.

- the meaning of the term 'revenue settlement',
- the aims of the British in their various 'settlements',
- the important features of the three main types of settlement, and
- the important effects of each settlement on the rural economy and on the relation of different classes in the country side.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The market is a familiar institution for all of us. You must have frequently gone to a market to make purchases, or sometimes to sell things. This is because we live in a commercialized economy. People work and earn, or produce and sell, because they get money with which they can buy what they want on the market. All sorts of things can be bought on the market-from little things like cigarettes or sweets to expensive things like houses or land. There are even markets for labour. Now, in a commercialized, or (what is the same thing) a market economy, economic activities are regulated by the market. What does this statement mean? It only means that people try to buy as cheaply, and to; sell as dearly as they can, It also means that they will produce more if prices are high, and less if they are low. Workers will try and leave localities and jobs where they earn little and try and go where the pay is good. In all these ways, economic actions are being directed by market prices. In this Unit we will introduce you to the process of commercialization of Indian agriculture under the British rule and its effect on Indian economy and society.

When agriculture is commercialized, several different markets may come into operation at different times. These markets are:

i) Product markets - various agriculturals products, such as wheat or rice or wool or ghee begin to be sold;

ii) Input markets - things needed for agricultural production such as tools, seeds, fertilisers, bullocks, begin to be sold;

iii) Labour markets - when workers begin to be hired for money;

iv) Land markets - when farmers begin to buy and sell the land, or hire it for money; and

v) Market for money itself-as commercialization develops, the cultivators are often in need of money, to pay taxes or rents in cash, to buy seed or bullocks, or even to feed themselves and their families. A market in loans grows up, and the 'price' of the loan is, of course, the interest that the borrower must pay.

The British government, as it established itself in various parts of India also imposed very heavy taxes on agriculture. In order to assess and collect these taxes, it instituted various land revenue settlements. So it is necessary to institute some regular system of taxation. Such a system has two requirements: the government has to fix what or how much will be

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paid - this amount is called the 'assessment; and it has to fix who will have to pay. Now the person who is called on to pay a certain amount must have some connection with, some control over the land from which the tax is to be collected' because he will otherwise be incapable of paying anything from it. Now, when the government had fixed (or 'settled') how the land tax (or land revenue) was to be 'assessed', and who was to pay it, and what was to be paid, the essential steps in a land revenue settlement were complete. In this Unit our focus is on the various land revenue settlements introduced by the British in India, their features and the impact they had on Indian economy and society.

6.2 COMMERCIALIZATION UNDER THE BRITISH

Among the new powers that took advantage of the decline of the Mughals was the British East India Company. It acquired territories in South India, and also the rich provinces of Bensal, Bihar and coastal Orissa in the East. These areas possessed a rich agriculture as also flourishing trade and handicrafts, and the Company as well as its servants and employees planned to enrich themselves through this conquest. It is the methods adopted by them that gave the commercialization under their control its distinctive characteristics.

6.2.1 Effect of the Export Trade on Agriculture

The company realised that it needed to promote other lines of export from India, agricultural products were a safe line. They could not compete with British products, and might serve as raw materials for British industry. This strategy had been followed in the case of silk from the 1770s, but with the development of British industry this trend grew stronger. Furthermore, by the 1780s an indirect method of remitting the Indian tribute via China had begun to take shape. The British imported large quantities of tea from China, and had to pay for it in silver, as the Chinese did not want Western goods. However, the Chinese bought Indian products like ivory, raw cotton and (later on) opium. If the British controlled this trade, then they would not need to send silver to China - the tea could be got in exchange for Indian products that the British acquired in India. This system became known as 'triangular trade', Its three points being Calcutta, Canton, and London. Wealth circulated through the first two but gathered in the Company's treasury in the third.

So, to conclude, The East India Company was interested in producing a controlled commercialization of agriculture in order to provide commodities for either the Chinese or the Western market.

6.2.2 The Selection of the Commercial Crops

The crops on which the company concentrated were indigo, cotton, raw silk, opium, pepper, and, in the 19th century, also tea and sugar. Of these, raw silk was used by British weavers; it could not be produced in Britain. The same was true of cotton, and it could also be sold to the Chinese. Opium, of course, was smuggled into China despite the Chinese prohibitions on its import. Indigo was a textile dye needed in the West. Tea cultivation was introduced in Assam from the 1840s so that Britain could control its supply, and did not have to depend on China for it. None of these things we may note, competed with or replaced any British product. All of them also had

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another characteristic in common; they were all valuable in relation to their bulk, which is to say that their price per kilogram or per cubic metre was high.

At this time, we must remember, all goods went over land in carts pulled by horses or bullocks, and over the sea in sailing ships, It took four months or more for a ship to sail from India to Europe, and the ships carried far less than modern cargo vessels. So the cost of transport was high. Now, if cheap, bulky goods had been carried they would have; become very expensive after the shipping cost had been paid. This would make them unprofitable for the Company to trade in. So it was necessary for the products to be profitable in relation to their weight, so that the transport costs did not eat up the profits.

6.3 THE EFFECTS OF COMMERCIALIZATION

We have seen in detail how the different commercial crops were produced and sold. It will be obvious to you that each is different from the others in certain ways and it follows that the effects of commercialization will differ from time to time, place to place, and crop to crop. We cannot expect them to be exactly the same everywhere. However, certain common features, and certain common effects to exist: and it is on these that this section will focus.

6.3.1 Impoverishment

Let us start with the Indian economy as a whole. You will remember that the object of the British was to produce goods for export to Europe, so that funds could be accumulated in the Company's treasury in London. Private English businessmen also wanted to send money back so that they could ultimately retire to a life of comfort in Britain. The exports therefore served essentially to remit resources out of India. It was the method by which the Indian 'tribute' was transferred to Britain. India received no imports in return for these exports. Obviously such a transfer impoverished India. The growth and export of commercial crops thus served to impoverish rather than to enrich India.

6.3.2 Instability

Agriculture in India was exposed to many hazards; drought, flood or other "Calamity could destroy the crops and ruin the farmers. But with commercial agriculture a new set of dangers appeared. The crops were now going to distant markets. If the West Indian sugar crop was good, prices might fall in Calcutta, and the sugar factories in Azamgarh might pay the peasants less than they had promised, and maltreat them if they complained.

Similarly, Bundelkhand region (the northern part, of Madhya Pradesh) began to grow a lot of cotton for the China market after 1816. The British officials claimed that the area thus became very prosperous, and increased the land tax. However, the export declined in the 1830s, prices fell-but the taxes were not reduced. Both zamindars and peasants became impoverished, the land went out of cultivation, and finally in 1842 uprising, known as the Bundela Rebellion broke out.

Uttar Pradesh also suffered in a similar way in the 1830s. The price of cotton and indigo fell, and as Professor Siddiqi describes it: 'Peasants were abandoning their lands, Zamindars had suffered losses. Money-lenders had been ruined because the loans they had made had not been repaid; many of

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them now refused to lend money to the cultivators. Land had depreciated in value: innumerable cases were reported of estates being put up for sale and no buyers coming forward.' The situation in rural Bengal was also similar at this time.

This was not the result of coincidence. Between 1830 and 1833 almost all the big firms connected with the export trade and the finance of commercial agriculture in Bengal, Bihar and U.P. went bankrupt. The reason was that they had gone on despatching indigo to Britain even though prices were falling, because they wanted to get their money out of India. The Government made matters worse by sending out bullion to London, and thus causing a scarcity of money in India. Businessmen who had borrowed to produce the export crops found that they could not repay the Joans, and went bankrupt. Finally, of course the worst sufferers were the peasants who had been drawn by force and persuasion into the production of the commercial crops. Falling prices in London came to ruin cultivators in India. This is what we mean when we say the commercialization added a fresh element of instability to the rural economy.

6.3.3 Effects on Social Structure

It is sometimes believed that commercialization necessarily results in growing inequality within the peasantry, with some becoming wealthy and employing wage labourers, and others losing their land and forced to work for wages. This may happen if the markets arc allowed to develop and function freely, and, in particular, the market for land becomes active. However, we have been that this was not the case in he commercialization that we are studying. The continual use of coercion and State power distorted the markets and prevented the appearance of a full labour market. Instead, commercial production fastened itself on the existing structure of small peasant production and impoverished it. Production continued to be carried on by the peasant and his family on i heir little plot of land, but now the indigo planter or opium agent forced him to mark off a part of his land for a commercial crop, from which he earned little or nothing. The peasant was impoverished, but neither the method nor the organization of production were altered. The European businessmen found it more profitable to exploit the small peasant household than to engage in large-scale production with hired labour.

Check Your Progress 1

l) Have markers always existed'?

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2) Why did the English Company plan for commercialization of Indian agriculture? Answer in 50 words.

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3) Was commercialization beneficial for the peasants? Answer in 60 words

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6.4 FIRST EXPERIMENT IN LAND REVENUE MANAGEMENT

After gaining control of Bengal in 1757, the British thought that they would retain the administration established by the Nawabs of Bengal, but would use it to collect an ever-growing amount for themselves. However, the rapacity and corruption of the Company's employees, and their continual interference in the administration led to complete disorganization, and was one of the causes of the terrible famine of 1769-70, in which it was estimated that one-third of the people of Bengal died.

From 1772 therefore, a new system was introduced: this was the farming system. Under this system the government gave out the collection of land revenue on a contract basis. The contractor who offered to pay the largest amount from a certain district or sub-division was given full powers for a certain number of years. Obviously, such contractors (they were called 'farmers' in those days), would try and extort as much as possible during the period that they held the contract; it would not matter to them if the people were ruined and the production in the later years declined. After all, they would have made their profit. Extortion and oppression were the obvious results of such a system. Furthermore, many of the contractors had offered to pay very large amounts, and later found that they could not collect so much, even with great oppression. Finally, the system also led to corruption. As with many government contracts even today, profitable contracts on very easy terms were given to the friends and favourites and 'benamidars' of men in power, leading to loss to the government. In 1786 Lord Cornwallis was sent out to India with orders to clean up and reorganize the administration.

6.5 THE PERMANENT SETTLEMENT IN BENGAL

Cornwallis realised that the existing system was impoverishing the country– its agriculture was in decline. Furthermore, it was failing to produce the large and regular surplus that the Company hoped for. And it was also becoming difficult for the Company to get the large quantities of Indian goods that it planned to export to Europe, because, as Cornwallis observed, the production of silk, cotton, etc. all depended on agriculture, When agriculture was decaying, handicrafts could hardly be prosperous. And both the London authorities and Cornwallis were agreed that much of the corruption and oppression originated in the fact that the taxation had the character of an 'uncertain, arbitrary imposition'.

It was decided therefore. that the land tax would now be permanently fixed: the government would promise never to increase it in future. Several effects were expected from this measure. It would reduce the scope for corruption that existed when officials could alter the assessment at will. Furthermore, now the state would not demand anything extra if the production increased it was hoped that landholders would invest money in improving the land as the whole of the benefit would come to them. Production and trade would increase, and the government would also get its taxes always levy taxes on trade and commerce in order to raise more money if it was needed. In any case, the land revenue was now fixed at a very high level-an absolute maximum of Rs.2 crore and 65 lakhs.

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6.5.1 A Settlement With Zamindars

So we see the land revenue was fixed permanently. But from whom was it to be collected? The Nawabs of Bengal had collected taxes from the zamindars. These zamindars were usually in control of large areas; sometimes entire districts. They had their own armed forces, and were termed Rajas. But there were also zamindars who held smaller areas, and either paid directly to the State, or paid through some big zamindar. The actual cultivation was carried on by peasants who paid the zamindars at customary rates fixed in every sub-division (or pargana). Oppressive zamindars often added extra charges called 'abwabs' on top of the regular land revenue rates.

By 1790 British rule had greatly confused this picture. Some Zamindars were retained - others were replaced by contractors or officials. The old customary rates were ignored, and every abuse permitted, if it led to an increase in the revenues. By the time Cornwallis arrived on the scene, the situation was one of the complete confusion. The new Governor-General belonged to the landed aristocracy of Britain and was in favour of a settlement that gave the right of ownership to the zamindars, who, he hoped, would improve the land as English landlords did. But apart from this perference on his part, it was difficult for the government to make the settlement with any other class.

To understand this you must bear in mind that there must have been about four or five million cultivating families in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa at that time. Collecting from them would have involved the preparation of detailed records of all their holdings, and the calculation of a tax on this basis. This would take several years and a large staff to execute. In addition it would give great opportunities for corruption. It was obviously much simpler to collect the revenue from a small number of big zamindars and this was the arrangement made under the Permanent Settlement that was introduced in Bengal and Bihar in 1793. Every bit of agricultural land in these provinces therefore became part of some zamindari. The zamindar had to pay the tax fixed upon it: if he did so then he was the proprietor, the owner of his zamindari. He could sell, mortgage or transfer it. The land would be. inherited by heirs in due course. If however, the zamindar failed to pay the tax due, then the Government would take. the zamindari and sell it by auction, and all the rights would vest in the new owner.

6.5.2 The Position of the Cultivators

The actual cultivation of the land was of course, carried on by the lakhs of peasants who were now reduced to the status of tenants of the zamindars; Cornwallis had also decreed that the zamindars should issue written agreements (called pattas) to each cultivator, and these should specify what the tenant was to pay. He apparently believed that this would prevent oppression by the zamindars. In practice, however, no such pattas were issued, and the peasants were wholly at the mercy of the zamindars.

This was not accidental. As well have noted earlier, the permanent assessment was the largest sum that could be got from the land. It was a heavy and oppressive assessment. According to the estimate of a knowledgeable official, John Shore, if a piece of lana produced crops worth Rs. 100, then Rs.45 went to the government, Rs. 15 to the zamindar and only Rs. 40 was left to the cultivator. Such oppressive taxes could only be collected by oppressive methods. If the zamindars were not allowed to oppress the

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peasants then they would not be able to meet the demands of the State. By regulations made in 1793, 1799 and 1812, the zamindar could seize, that is, carry away the tenants' property if the rent had not been paid. He did not need the permission of any court of law to do this. The was legal method of harassment. In addition to this the zamindars often resorted to illegal methods, such as locking up or beating tenants who did not pay whatever was demanded. The immediate effect of the Settlement was, therefore, to greatly worsen the position of the actual cultivators of the soil, in order to benefit the zamindars and the British Government.

6.5.3 Effects of the Permanent Settlement

It may seem that the settlement was greatly in favour of the zamindars but we should not forget that they were also now obliged to pay a fixed amount by fixed dates every year, and any failure on their part meant the sale of the zamindari. Furthermore, many of the zamindari were rated for large sums that left no margin for shortfalls due to flood, drought or other calamity. As a result, many zamindars had their zamindaris taken away and sold in the decades immediately after the permanent Settlement. In Bengal alone it is estimated that 68 per cent, of the zamindari land was sold between 1794 and 1819. Merchants, government officials, and other zamindars bought these lands. The new buyers would then set about trying to increase the rents paid by the tenants in order to make a profit from their purchases. Raja Rammohan Roy remarked that: under the premanent settlement since 1793, the landholders have adopted every measure to raise the rents, by means of the power put into their hands.

However, many zamindar still found it difficult to pay the amount demanded by the British. One such zamindar, the Raja of Burdwan then divided most of his estate into 'lots' or factions called patni taluqs. Each such unit was permanently rented to a holder called be taken away and sold. Other zamindars also resorted to this: thus a process of subinfeudation commenced.

Gradually the population of Bengal increased, waste and jungle land came under cultivation. Rents also increased. On the other hand, the tax payable to government was fixed, so the position of the zamindars improved, and they were able to lead lives of indolence and luxury at the expense of their tenants. Only in 1859 did the State take some step to protect the rights of tenant: a law passed that year bestowed a limited protection on old tenants, who were now termed occupancy tenants.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What were the motives behind the introduction of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal? What was its effect on the position of the cultivators? Answer in 100 words.

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2) Write a short note on the farming system.

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6.6 THE EMERGENCE OF ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM

Meanwhile other ways of assessing and collecting the land-tax were being devised by British officials. Two officers, Munro and Read were sent to administer a newly conquered region of Madras in 1792. Instead of collecting from the zamindars, they began to collect directly from the villages, fixing the amount that each village had to pay. After this they proceeded to assess each cultivator or ryot separately-and thus evolved what came to be known as the 'Ryotwari' system. This early ryotwari was a field assessment system. This means that the tax payable on each field was fixed by a government officer, and then the cultivating had the choice of cultivating that field and paying that amount, or not cultivating it. If no other cultivator could be found, then the field would not be cultivated: it would lie fallow.

6.6.1 Land Assessment under Ryotwari

You can see that the officer fixing the tax, or settling the revenue, has a difficult task. He has to fix the tax on thousands of fields in a sub-division or district, and co fix it in such a way that the burden on cacti such field is approximately equal. If the burden is not equally distributed, then the cultivators will not occupy the heavily assessed fields, and cultivate only those with a light assessment.

Now, in fixing the assessment of a field, the revenue officer had to consider two things: one was the quality of the soil - whether it was rocky or rich, irrigated or dry etc.; the other was area of the field. It followed, therefore, that this system depended on a survey, that is, a classification of it. Thus one acre of first class rice land should pay the same amount regardless of whether it was located in this village or that one. But how was this amount to be fixed?

Munro usually fixed it by estimating what the usual product of the land was - for example - 2600 lbs. of paddy per acre. He would then claim that the State share of this amounted to one third of this, or two-fifths of this, and thus calculate. the amount that the cultivator had to pay the State. This, of course is the theory of ryotwari - in practice, the estimates were largely guesswork, and the amounts demanded so high that they could be collected with great difficulty, and sometimes could not be collected at all.

6.6.2 The Adoption of Ryotwari in Madras

After some experiments with other ways of managing the land revenue, the Madras authorities were by 1820 converted to the ryotwari system, and its triumph was indicated by the appointment of Munro as Governor of Madras. Munro advanced many arguments in favour of this system. He argued that it was the original Indian land tenure, and the one best suited to Indian conditions. Its adoption was due, however, to one main reason– it resulted in a larger revenue than any other system could have produced. This was because there were no zamindars or other intermediaries who received any part of the agricultural surplus– whatever could be squeezed from the cultivator went directly to the State. The Madras government. was chronically short of funds, and such a system would naturally appeal to it. So, taking advantage of the rejection of the Permanent Settlement, it introduced the temporary ryotwari settlement.

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6.6.3 Ryotwari Theory and Practice

We have outlined the ryotwari system as it was developed by Munro in the districts under his charge. After 1820 however ryotwari was extended to most of the Madras Presidency in forms quite different from those visualised by Munro. His ryotwari, you will remember, was a field assessment, leaving the cultivator free to cultivate or give up any particular field. And, as we saw, the working of such a system depended upon the government carrying out a detailed measurement and assessment of each field. But after 1820 the system was extended to many districts where no surveys had ever been carried out. No one knew how much land a peasant cultivated, or what its product might be. His tax came to be fixed on an arbitrary basis, usually by looking at what he had paid in earlier years. This was known as a 'putcut' assessment.

Again, in theory the ryotwari allowed the ryot to give up any field that he chose. But it soon became clear that if this was freely permitted the tax revenue of the State would fall. So government officers began to compel the cultivators to hold on to (and of course, pay for) land that they did not really want to cultivate. Since cultivation was not voluntary, it. was always difficult to collect the revenue, and so the use of beating and torture to enforce payment was also widespread. These methods were exposed by the Madras Torture Commission in 1854. After this certain reforms were introduced. A scientific survey of the land was undertaken, the real burden of tax declined, and there was no need to use violent and coercive methods to collect the revenue. However, these improvements occurred after 1860 beyond the period that we are studying at present.

6.6.4 The Ryotwari Settlement in Bombay

Ryotwari in the Bombay Presidency had its beginnings in Gujarat. The British began by collecting the land revenue through the hereditary officials called desais and the village headmen (Patel). However, this did not produce as much revenue as the British wanted, so they began collecting directly from the peasants in 1813-14. When they conquered the Peshwa's territory in 1818 the ryotwari system on the Madras pattern was also introduced there, under the supervision of Munro's disciple Elphinstone. The abuses that characterized the Madras ryotwari soon appeared in the Bombay Presidency also, especially as the Collectors began trying to increase the revenue as rapidly as they could.

A regular measurement and classification of the land was commenced under the supervision of an officer named Pringle. This survey was supposed to be founded upon the theory of rent developed by the English economist Ricardo. This theory was hardly applicable to Indian conditions, and in any case, Pringle's calculations were full of errors, and the resulting assessment was far too high. When the government tried to collect the amounts fixed by Pringle in Pune district, many of the cultivators gave up their lands and fled into the territory of the Nizam of Hyderabad. This assessment thus had to be abandoned after some years.

It was replaced by a reformed system divised by two officers named Wingate and Goldsmid. Their system did not try to apply any theoretical rules: instead it aimed at moderating the demand to a level where it could be regularly paid. The actual assessment of each field depended upon its soil

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and location. This new assessment began to be made in 1836 and covered most of the Deccan by 1865. Its effects upon agriculture were beneficial, and the eultivated area expanded as the new assessment was introduced.

6.6.5 Effects of the Ryotwari System in Madras and Bombay

There is hardly any doubt that the effects of this system upon the rural economy were distinctly harmful. The peasants were impoverished and lacked the resources to cultivate new lands. The Government of Madras itself noted in 1855 that only 14½ million acres of ryotwari land were cultivated, while 18 million acres were waste. It confessed: 'There is no room for doubt that an increase of cultivation would follow reductions of the Government tax.'

Apart from this depressing effect upon the rural economy, the heavy burden of taxation distorted the land market. Land in most districts of Madras had no value in the first half of the 19th century. No one would buy it, because buying it meant that the new own.er would have to pay the extortionate land revenue. After paying it, he would have no income from the land, and obviously, in such circumstances, no one would purchase land.

We have seen how the Permanent Settlement established a few big zamindars in a position of dominance over the mass of the peasants. The social effects of the, ryotwari settlements wereless dramatic. In many areas the actual cultivating peasants were recorded as the occupants or 'ryots', and thus secured the title to their holdings. However, as we saw, the tax was so heavy that many peasants would have gladly abandoned at least some of their land, and had to be prevented from doing so. It was also possible for non-cultivating landlords to have their names entered as the occupants (or owners) of particular holdings, while the actual cultivation was carried on by their tenants, servants or even bonded labourers. This was particularly the case in irrigated districts like Thanjavur (in Tamil Nadu) where many of the 'ryots' held thousands of acres of land. There was no limit to the amount of land that a ryot could hold, so there could be great difference in wealth and status between oneryot and another. However, money-lenders and other non-cultivators were not much interested in acquiring lands because of the heavy taxes that came with them. Hence the small peasants, oppressed though they might be by the tax-collector did not have to fear expropriation by the money-lender or landlord.

Under the reformed ryotwari system that gradually developed in Bombay after 1836 and Madras after 1858 the burden of the land revenue was somewhat reduced, and land acquired a saleable value. The purchaser could now expect to make a profit from owning land. the State would not take it all as tax. One result of this was that money-lenders began to seize the lands of their peasant debtors and either evict them or reduce them to tenants. This process led to considerable social tension, and caused a major rural uprising in the Bombay Deccan in 1875.

6.7 THE OTHER ALTERNATIVE SYSTEM : THE MAHALWARI SYSTEM

The aggressive policies of Lord Wellesley led to large territorial gains for the British in North India between 1801 and 1806. These areas came

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to be called the North-Western Provinces. Initially the British planned a settlement on the Bengal pattern, Wellesley ordered the local officials co make the settlement with the zamindars wherever they could, provided they agreed to pay a suitably high land revenue. Only if the zamindars refused to pay, or nor zamindars could be found were the settlements to be made village by village 'giving the preference to the mokuddums, perdhauns or any respectable. Ryots of the village'. Ultimately, the settlement was to be made permanent, as in Bengal.

In the meantime, however, every effort was made to enlarge the revenue collection. The demand in 1803-4 was Rs.188 lakhs-by 1817-18 it was Rs. 297 lakhs.

Such enormous increases provoked resistance from many of the big zamindars and. rajas, who had been almost independent in the earlier period. Many of them were therefore driven off their lands by the new administration. In other cases the old zamindars could not pay the amount demanded, and their estates were sold by the Government. Increasingly, therefore, it became necessary to collect from the village directly through its pradhan or muqaddam (headman). In the revenue records the word used for a fiscal unit was a 'mahal', and the village wise assessment therefore came to be called a mahalwari settlement. It was however quite possible for one person to hold a number of villages, so that many big zamindars continued to exist. Furthermore, as in Bengal, the confusion and coercion that accompanied the collection of the very heavy land tax created fine opportunities for the Ideal officials, and large areas of land were illegally acquired by them in the early years. Meanwhile, the Government found that its expenditures were alwasy exceeding its revenues, and the idea of a permanent settlement was dropped.

6.7.1 Mahalwari Theory and Practice

In 1819 an English official, Holt Mackenzie, developed the theory that taluqdars and zamindars were originally appointed by the State, and the real owners of villages were the zarnindars who lived in them, or constituted the village community. He argued that their rights and payments should be clearly established by a survey. His ideas were embodied in a law, Regulation VII of 1822. This required that Government officials should record all the rights of cultivators, zamindars and others, and also fix the amounts payable from every piece of land. The Governor-General orders:

It seems necessary to enter on the task of fixing in detail the rates of rent and modes of payment current in each village, and applicable to each field: and anything short of this must be regarded as a very imperfect Settlement.

In practice, this proved impossible to implement. The calculations made were often quite inaccurate, and the Collectors in any case slanted them so as to increase the revenue due to the Government. Far from favouring the village communities, the new mahalwari often ruined them by imposing impossible tax assessments. In 1833 it was decided that the detailed effort to regulate all rights and payments should be given up, and that a rough and ready estimate of what the village could pay to the State was adequate. In later years, these estimates came to be guided by the rents paid by the tenants of village lands to the owners. From these rents the Settlement officer would calculate the theoretical amount that all the lands of the village or mahal

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would yield. Then some part - ultimately 50 per cent of this would have to be paid to the Government. All these calculations involved a large amount of guesswork: and, not suprisingly, the guesses tended to be on the high side, increasing the amounts to be paid to the State.

6.7.2 Effects of the Mahalwari Settlement

One of !he early effects was that the areas under the control of the big taluqdars was reduced. The British officers made direct settlements with the village zamindars as far as possible, and even supported them in the law cogrts when 'the taluqdars brought suits against them. But the so-called village zamindars were supported only because it was planned to extract the highest possible revenue from them. They were freed from taluqdar's claims only to subject them to a full measure of government taxation.

The result was often the ruin of the village zamindars. One officer reported that in many villages of Aligarh : the Juma (land revenue) was in the first place considerably too heavy; and in which the Malgoozars revenue payers seem to have lost all hope of 'improving their condition or of bearing up against the burden imposed on them. They are now deeply in debt, and utterly incapable of making any arrangements for defraying their arrears.

The result of this situation was.that large areas of land began to pass into the hands of money-lenders and merchants who ousted the old cultivating proprietors or reduced them to tenants at will. This occurred most frequently in the more commercialised districts, where the land revenue demand had been pushed to the highest level, and where the landholders suffered most acutely from the business collapse and export depression after 1833. By the 1840s it was not uncommon to find that no buyers could be found to take land that was being sold for arrears of land revenue. As in the Madras Presidency, the tax in these cases was so high that the buyer could not expect to make any profit from the purchase. Overall, therefore, the mahalwari settlement brought impoverishment and widespread dispossession to the cultivating communities of North India in the 1830s and 1840s, and their resentment expressed itself in popular uprisings in 1857. In that year villagers and taluqdars all over North India drove off government official, destroyed court and official records and papers. and ejected the new auction, purchasers from the villages.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Give three important differences between the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwari Settlement?

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2) In what way did the Mahalwari Settlement differ from the Ryotwari Settlement? Answer in five lines.

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3) What was the effect of the Mahalwari Settlement on the rurual economy? Answer in 60 words.

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6.8 LET US SUM UP

Thus we see in this Unit that although commercialization was not completely new to India, the form that it took under early British rule differed in several important ways from that which had existed under the Indian rulers. This commercialization occurred under tile auspices of a trading company whose headquarters la:, in England and most of whose employees came from there:

- So the question of remitting or transferring wealth from India to Britain was a central, aim,
- So the commercial production of items with a market in the West had to be specifically organized,
- But all these items had to be secured at as low a cost as possible, so the Company used, and allowed planters and others to use coercion and violence on the Indian producers so as to keep prices down,
- Products could be got most cheaply by squeezing the peasants rather than by resorting to direct production with wage labour,
- While the product market was commercialised, other markets such as that for land and labour could not develop; and
- So the peasant economy was impoverished, but neither the methods nor the organization of production were altered.

As a result, small farming based on family labour remained the predominant form in the Indian countryside.

Thus in this Unit we have see how the three major land systems devised by the British came into existence. When areas came under British rule the settlements made resembled either the ryotwari or the mahalwari. Thus Punjab came under the mahalwari, as did a large part of central India under a slightly modified form known as malguzari. In Awadh, after the revolt of 1857 the government recognized the talqudars as proprietors so as to ensure that they supported it in any future revolt. The assessment itself was mahalwari.

An ever-present theme throughout our discussion has been that the drive to collect a large revenue was central to British Policy. Sometimes this led to the development of a land market to the sale and purchase of land. But at other times, the State's demands were so heavy that no purchasers were to be found. The need to collect so much was itself made necessary by the heavy expenditures of the Government in India, and its need to send large sums to Britain for its expense there. Some other aspects of this will be discussed in Unit 16 on the commercialization of agriculture.

6.9 KEY WORDS

Export: The commercial operation in which products and goods of one country are sold to another country or countries.

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Instability in Agriculture: Traditionally agriculture is exposed to the risks of drought, floods etc. With the agriculture market being linked to distant markets now agricultural products were exposed to vagaries of prices in other countries as well. So if the cotton prices fell in another country the price of cotton in India too would be affected.This led to new instabilities in the agricultural market.

6.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 6.1

2) See-Sec 6.2

2) See-Sec 6.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) Your answer should focus on the economic interest that the British had for the introduction of the Permanent Settlement. In the second part of the answer, you should write about the growing dependancy of the cultivators on the zamindars and the miseries that the cultivators had to face.

1) See Sub-sec 6.5.1, 6.5.2, 6.5.3

2) See Section 6.4

Check Your Progress 3

1) One was with the zamindars, other was with the Ryots, for more differences, See Sections 6.5 and 6.6

2) See Secs. 6.7 and 6.8

3) Growth of money-lenders and merchants in the rural economy, dispossession and impoverishment of the cultivating communities, etc. See Sub-section 6.7.2

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UNIT 7 COLONIAL ECONOMY : TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Structure

7.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit you will study:

- how the East India Companies were structured as joint stock enterprises of many investors,
- how and why these merchant capitalist ventures known as East India Companies were give monopoly trade privileges by the governments of their respective countries,
- how there was a struggle between monopoly trade of the English East India Company and English Free Traders, leading to the withdrawal of monopoly privileges,
- the nature of the trade of the English Company and the private trade of servants of the Company in India as a collective monopoly.
- the reasons why merchant capitalist enterprises turned towards acquisition of territories and political power, and
- how the rise of industrial capitalism changed the nature of Indo-British economic relations, and consequent changes in the Company's mercantile policies.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit introduces you to the structure and nature of the East India Company's trade in India and the monopoly that it enjoyed, the struggle between monopoly trade of the Company and English Free Traders, the motives behind acquisition of territories and political power by the Company, rise of industrial capitalism in English and its effect on the Company's mercantile policies.

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7.2 STRUCTURE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

You must have observed that today business enterprise is dominated by companies which sell stocks and shares in order to raise the capital they need in business. These are joint stock companies as distinct from business owned by a single proprietor or some proprietors in partnership. The East India Companies of Europe were some of the earliest joint stock companies in the world.

What was so special about these companies and how did the joint stock form of organization give them any advantage? To begin with, the joint stock structure, that is to say the collection of capital from a number of stock or shareholders enabled these companies to put together a much larger quantity of capital then was possible for a single proprietor or a few in partnership. Moreover, a joint stock company ensured continuity of business activities and policies over a long period, something for centuries; unlike the shorter life span of business run by a single proprietor. Consider also the fact that in joint stock company there is scope for mobility of capital; in other words, the money invested in the shareholdings of one company could be taken out by the share owner (by selling his share to another) and put to other uses, including investment in another company. Thus capital was not tied up in one enterprise, but moved with greater ease to more profitable enterprises, thus ensuring the most efficient use of capital.

For all these reasons the joint stock company form of organizing the business of East Indian trade was superior to and more efficient than any earlier form. Particularly for the trade with India the European countries needed this new form of organization because of the large amount of investment required, the uncertainty of business (ship-wreck, wars etc), and the long waiting period between investment and realisation of profit (due to the long voyage by sailing ships around the continent of Africa to India). In the early days the English merchants used to pool their money to buy or hire and equip ships to go on a voyage to India for these reasons. The logical culmination of this development was the foundation of the East India Company (1600) as a joint stock enterprise. In the beginning only a few very wealthy merchants of London were shareholders of the East India Company. But in course of the 18th century relatively smaller shareholders began to participate in and became owners of the new United Company of the Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies (founded in 1708). This new company continued to be called the East India Company as of old.

7.3 EAST INDIA COMPANY'S MONOPOLY

Another structural feature of the English East India Company was that it was granted a monopoly by the government of England. What was meant by this monopoly and why did the government grant it? Monopoly' in a general sense means the exclusive control of trade with India and other countries on the India Ocean and further east up to China. In consequence only the East India Company (to the exclusion of any other person or business firm) was legally entitled to trade with the above-said countries. This was a legal right conferred upon the East India Company by Queen Elizabeth-I in the first

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instance and later by other monarchs. Why did the monarchs or governments do so in the 17th and 18th centuries? They gave this monopoly right to the East India Company partly because it was commonly believed, under the influence of the Mercantilist school of thought, that the state must promote trade abroad to bring home wealth from foreign trade. The risky trade with distant countries was supposed to be particularly in need of monopoly system so as to ensure to the investors profits of monopoly and thus to encourage such investment. Moreover, the relatively wealthy English merchants in the Indian trade were influential in the monarch's courts and the government.

East India House

At any rate, the upshot was that the Government in England conferred a monopoly of trade on the East India Company. This was done by granting to the Company's 'charter', i.e. a deed or a written grant of monopoly rights renewed from time to time by the government. The instrument by which such a right was conferred on the company became known in late 18th and early 19th centuries as the 'charter act', passed by the English Parliament. (The French and Dutch East Indian Companies also enjoyed monopoly rights granted by their government.)

Now, it is one thing to declare such a government grant of monopoly, and it is quite another thing to make the monopoly (i.e. the exclusion of others) effective in fact. What did the legal monopoly mean in actual practices?

7.4 MONOPOLY VERSUS FREE TRADE

From the middle of the 18th century till 1813 the East India Company, particularly its top management, called the Court of Director, had to struggle very hard to make the Company's monopoly rights effective, i.e. to exclude others from entering the trade. This was no easy task. For one thing, the English East India Company's own employees were naturally not above the temptation to set up a private business along with their official business, i.e. the Company's business. For another, there were always merchants and adventures making their way to India and managing to set up business firms of their own; these were called 'free merchants' for interlopers' (i.e. intruders engaged in unauthorized business). Both kinds of activities came

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in the way of the Company's monopoly.

As regard the first of these, the private business of the servants or employees of the East India Company, the problem was that the self-interest of the bulk of the Company's employees including the top men in India would not allow the strict implementation of the instructions of the Company Directors to stop private trade. The scale of salary, till the beginning of the 19th century was low, and the practice of supplementing the salary with profits of private trade was, widespread. What is more, the Company servants were in the habit of passing off their own private trade commodities as part of the Company's export commodities in order to claim exemption from internal duties in Bengal. This, known as the abuse of the *dastak* (i.e. permit to trade duty free), became the subject of contention and a cause of conflict, between the Bengal Nawab and the English. In fact the private trade interests of the Company's servants and the Company's officials trade became practically inseparable in the last half of the 18th century.

As for the Free Merchants their chief aim was to expand their business at the cost of the Company's business. Yet they were tolerated because the Company's servants found them increasingly useful to enable the Company's servants to invest their savings and ill-gotten plunder. Sending money to England was also facilitated by the Free Merchants. As the Directors of the East India Company and conscientious Governors like Lord Cornwallis began to insist on the withdrawal of the servants of the company from private trade, the Free Merchants obtained more capital from the Company servants. They acted so to speak as agents of the Company Servants. Hence there developed a number of Agency Houses which later, in the last half of the 19th century, became known as Managing Agencies.

In the meanwhile the monopoly privilege of the EIC came under attack in England. The doctrine of Free Trade, promoted by economists like Adam Smith (Wealth of Nations, 1776), was inimical to monopolies. The capitalists excluded from Indian trade by the EIC naturally lent support to the campaign for Free Trade. Capital accumulating in England wanted freedom from restrictions on investment. Moreover, the on-going Industrial Revolution brought to the fore in merchandising activities of the EIC, importing goods from India to England, diminished in importance in comparison with industrial manufacturing in England. There were strong lobbies in Parliament pressing for the abolition of the Company's monopoly.

In these circumstances the Charter Act of 1813 was passed abolishing the monopoly in Indian trade; another Charter Act in 1833 abolished the remaining part of the Company's privileged monopoly, that in the China trade. Thus, after more than two hundred years, the monopoly conferred on the EIC was taken away by the government.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the advantages of the joint stock companies? Answer in five sentences.

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2) What do you understand by Monopoly of Trade?

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3) Write in brief about the challenges that the EIC faced in respect of its monopoly over Indian trade? Answer in 100 words.

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7.5 NATURE OF THE COMPANY'S TRADE

We have been discussing above the legal monopoly created by the English government. In fact, the monopoly was entrenched upon, as we have noted. However, in certain parts of India the Company and English private traders collectively enjoyed virtually a monopolistic position. This was, for example, true of Bengal from the last decades of the 18th century.

When the essence of mercantile capitalist business was buying cheap, and selling dear, reduction of competition would be inevitably the aim of business. If you were aiming to buy cheaply you would find it advantageous to have as few buyers in the market as possible; obviously that helps to buy cheaply. Likewise it helps to sell your goods dear if you have as few sellers as possible. That is what monopolistic business is about. However, real life seldom matches the text book definition of a monopolist on a single buyer in the market. Conditions approximating that situation may exist under special circumstances, for example the use of coercion or force, legislation, or even warfare to eliminate competitors. All these means were used by the English East India Company in India.

As you know already the European East India Company's main business was to procure certain commodities like spices, indigo, cotton cloth etc. and export them to Europe. Procurement of these goods in India initially took place under fairly competitive conditions. A 17th century English Factory had generally to compact with local or 'country' merchants' and foreign traders, including other European East India Companies. In course of the 18th century the Englishmen increasingly acquired a position of advantage:

i) Other European East India Companies were marginalized; the military and political victories of the English Company took place.

ii) The weakness of the successor states and principalities since the decline of the Mughal Empire allowed the East India Companies to bully and bribe the local powers to grant Europeans special trade privileges.

iii) Artisans as well as peasants, e.g., weavers and indigo growers, were sometimes subjected to coercive practice from the late decades of the 18th century in order to procure goods at a cheap price or to persuade them to produce the goods for the Company. By the end of the 18th

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century the position acquired by the English East India Company and the servants of the Company in private trade may be described as a collective monopoly in respect of the chief commodities of export to Europe.

7.6 MERCANTILE BUSINESS AND POLITICAL POWER

We have discussed till now some of the features of mercantile capitalist activities, typified by the East India Company, but we have not touched upon one question. What motivated a company of merchants like EIC to launch on territorial expansion and what did it have to do with politics?

In the beginning of European trade with India there were only voyages to India by one or more ships from time to time. However, it was not easy to procure large quantities of goods in India at short notice when a 'voyage' visited an Indian port. Therefore, it became necessary to set up Factories in or near major sea ports or production centres. You must note that these were not factories of today where things are actually produced; the word 'factory' in 17th and 18th century English meant foreign trading stations set up by a merchant Company. The officials posted there were called 'factors' who were essentially salaried agents purchasing goods on behalf of the East India Company for export. Now the English as well as the other East India Companies wanted to protect the factories with a fort around it. After the decline of the Mughal empire set in, such protective fortification may have been need in some regions and some local government tacitly or explicitly allowed acquisition of land and building of forts by East India Companies. However, the Companies began to exceed the limits of legitimate self protection and fortified and militarized their trading stations as centres of armed power challenging local governments. Fort William of Calcutta and Fort ST. George of Madras were prominent instances of this. Thus, the fort provided a nucleus allowing the foreign merchants to spread their control over the neighbouring territory. The territorial claims of the Company sometimes had a legal basis (e.g. the grant of zamindari rights, as in Bengal), but more often than not the real basis of the territorial claims in the last decades of the 18th century was the military strength of the Company. You already know how the European Companies operated as one of the territorial powers from the middle of the 18th century.

The evolution of the English EIC from the Voyage system to factory system, from that to forts and eventually to the position of a territorial power helped in business; it was, not just a fit of absent mindedness and an aberration from the proper task of merchants that led to the political hegemony of the Company that became the British Indian Empire. It was useful to have military power to back up coercion on the artisans (e.g. the Bengal weavers) to produce goods at a cheap price, to bully the local merchants to make them subservient to English factors and private traders, and, of course, to eliminate other foreign merchants (particularly the French and the Dutch) from competing with the English. Moreover, a military and territorial power could extract from the regional principalities and the local nobility "Protection money", bribes etc, not to speak of plunder that ware fare brought in finally, control over territories brought in revenue. The classic example

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of this was the Dewani of Bengal from 1765. The company's share of the land revenue of Bengal enabled it to reduce for many years the remittance of bullion from England. Bullion was needed to buy goods in India for export by the Company and it was, of course, desirable to reduce bullion export from England by raising cash in India to pay for exports from India. Thus the territorial ambitions of the East India Company made a lot of economic sense so far as English interests were concerned.

These are some of the reasons why we see the Company playing such a salient role in Indian political history in the 18th century to emerge as the largest territorial power by the beginning of the 19th century.

7.7 RISE OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM AND THE COMPANY'S MERCANTILE POLICIES

In England in 1750, about 40 to 45 per cent of national income originated in the agricultural sector; by 1851 agriculture's share diminished to 20 per cent and by 1881 it came down to about 10 per cent. The contribution of foreign trade to England's national income was 14 per cent in 1790; it increased to 36 per cent by 1880. This helps us measure the rapid pace of industrialization in England; that country was transformed in the last half of the 18th and early 19th century.As a result industrial manufacture foreign trade in manufactures became the mainstay of the English economy. In particular the growth of English cotton textile industry obviously meant an end to the demand for Indian cloth in England. On the contrary, England was now seeking markets for her cotton textiles in, among other countries, India Moreover, to make industrial goods, England needed now more raw material than before, for example, England now, after her industrialization, would import raw cotton from, among other countries, India. Thus the whole basis of economic relationship between England and India was different after the industrialization of England compared to what it had been in the era of merchant capitalism.

In short, the Indian territories acquired by the merchant company had to fulfill a different role after the transformation of England into the first industrial capitalist country. The merchant company and their empire slowly veered towards a new role in the new scheme of things. In the period you are studying in this course, i.e. till 1857, only the beginnings of a new imperialism can be seen. It is seen in the decline of the export of Indian manufacture goods to England. The value of cotton cloth exported from India to England declined from pound 1.3 million to only pound 0.1 million in the years 1815 to 1832. In the same period the import of cotton cloth from England increased almost 15 times. In the previous century the mainstay of the Company's mercantile policy was to purchase cotton cloth in India for export. That procurement or purchase was naturally abandoned in the early decades of the 19th century. In the last days of the Company's trading career, in the 1820's, no cotton manufactures were exported by it to England; the only goods it exported were raw silk, saltpetre or raw material for gunpowder, indigo an agricultural product, and (the only manufactured commodity) a small amount of silk cloth. As regards imports from England, the East India Company stopped it altogether from 1824, except for military

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stores etc, used by the Company itself. The trade between India and Europe passed from the hands of the Company to private traders; as you know, the Charter Act of 1813 fully opened Indian trade to the private traders.

Another great change in the Company's policies and finances took place in the first decades of the 19th century. This was the increase in non-commercial earnings of the Company, i.e. what was called the Territorial Revenue which came from the land revenue and other taxes collected from territories conquered by the Company. At the same time the commercial earning declined because, as you already know, the Company's trade diminished in these years to the vanishings point. Thus from 1820's the Company depended almost entirely on Territorial Revenue whereas up to the 1765 the only income had been from commercial profits. From 1765, the assumption by the Company of the Dewani of Bengal, territorial revenue began to increase and eventually outstrip commercial earnings. Thus the finances of the Company reflected its transformation from and merchant corporation to a territorial power.

Finally, one may note that it was the Company's deliberate policy to divert the revenue it collected to commercial purposes. This was a result of the Company being simultaneously part of the government in Bengal from 1765 and a merchant company. A substantial portion of the revenue of Bengal was used in the purchase of goods for export to England, the so-called 'investment'. As a Committee of the English House of Common put it in 1783, such 'investment' was not actually employment of trading capital brought into Bengal, but merely a means of "payment of a tribute". This was a major example of what the Indian economic nationalists later called 'economic drain'. The territorial revenues also enabled the Company to raise money on credit (the so-called Territorial Debt) and to pay for military action for further territorial expansion.

7.8 DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION : IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS INDUSTRIES

Early nationalist economists such as R.C. Dutt and subsequently Madan Mohan Malaviya (in his dissent note at the Indian Industrial Commission) argued that India underwent de-industrialization; their evidence was statistics of import of manufactures, particularly import figures of Manchester made cotton cloth. For instance Dutt showed that the value of cotton goods sent from England and its ports east of the Cape of Good Hope mainly to India, increased in value from 156 in 1794 to 108824 in 1813.

In the pre-1813 period it was the excessive exploitation of the Indian industrial sector especially the textile industry by the monopolistic East India Company which led to the progressive degeneration of this industry. Forcible reduction of purchase prices in India was resorted to by the East India Company to increase the difference between its buying and selling price and consequently increase its trading profits.

The import restrictions on Indian textiles in England furthers weakens this industry. The income of weavers and spinners were drastically reduced, thereby restricting any possibility of capital accumulation and technological innovations in this traditional industrial sector.

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While India's traditional manufacturing sector was being steadily weakened under the Company, in the same period Britain had begun its Industrial Revolution and was rapidly expanding its industries by revolutionizing its technology as well as organization along principles of capitalist production.

The growing British textile industry had all the advantage which were denied to its Indian counterpart. The British industry had a rapidly developing technological base, it had the advantages of economies of scale and finally it was carefully protected in its formatives years from foreign competition.

Some historians have put forward the view that the export of British machine made yarn and cloth did not harm the indigenous textile industry because under British rule the growth of political stability, better transport facilities and market expansion led to increased per capita agricultural productivity; moreover it is argued that cheaper machine-made yarn strengthened the indigenous handloom sector, while a growth in per capita real income and new economic activities compensated for the decline in earlier enterprises. However, historical evidence does not bear out these arguments. There is no evidence whatsoever for a growth in the demand for cotton goods or a rise in per capita real income in the nineteenth century. Further, as Bipan Chandra has argued, the decline in the per unit price of cloth was much faster than that of yarn. This combined with the fact that the ratio prevented any benefit accruing to the Indian weaver. However, historical evidence does not bear out these arguments. There is no evidence whatsoever for a growth in the demand for cotton goods or a rise in per capita real income in the nineteenth century. Further, the decline in the per unit price of cloth was much faster than that of yarn.

Check Your Progress 2

List some of the economic factors that motivated the EIC to acquire territory and political power in India.

1) What are the changes brought about by Industrial Revolutions in the Company's mercantile policy? Answer in 100 words.

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2) Write a brief comment (100 words) on the view of nationalist economists on de-industrialization

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3) Read the following sentences and write 'Yes' and 'No' against each sentence.

   i) The charter Act of 1813 passed by the English Parliament abolished the monopoly of the EIC in Indian Trade.

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ii) The 'Factories' established by the English in India in 17th and 18th century were the foreign trading stations.

iii) The EIC tried to get territories power in India because the local rulers failed to administer the country properly.

iv) Industrialization in England did not bring any basic change in the economic relationship between England and India.

v) In the early 19th century the Company's earnings from territorial revenue increased compared to commercial profits.

7.9 LET US SUM UP

You have studied in this Unit the structure of the East India Companies as joint stock companies and you have seen how their respective governments conferred on them monopoly privileges. In course of the 18th century this monopoly was encroached upon by private trade very substantially. A struggle between the monopoly trade. In practice, a collective monopoly position was acquired by the English Company and Company servants in respect of the main export commodities in some parts of India from the last decades of the 18th century. This was correlated with the increasing political hegemony and territorial expansion of the English Company. The industrial transformation of England during the late18th and early 19th centuries brought about major changes in the Company's mercantile policies. A series of legal measures brought increasing control of the British government over the Company which in turn was changing from a merchant company to a territorial power.

Finally on the basis of qualitative official and private observations, trade statistics, employment data (however unreliable it might have been) and a knowledge of the imperatives and limits of the colonial economy in India, we can safely conclude that the Indian manufacturing sector did decline in the face of completion from machine-made, technologically superior manufactured imports from Britain during the first century of colonial rule in India.

7.10 KEY WORDS

Factory: Since the 19th century it means a workshop for manufacture of industrial goods; in earlier two centuries it meant merchant company's foreign trading station. Hence 'Factor' means a merchant company's employee stationed abroad.

Free Merchant: European traders who evaded the legal monopoly of the East India Company in Indian trade; often called 'interlopers' for intruders.

Mercantilism: Economic doctrine, widely accepted in 16th-17th century Europe, which encouraged state intervention to promote export and limit import so as to enrich a country with bullion.

Monopoly: Exclusive possession of the trade in some commodity or branch of trade (e.g. East India trade); often conferred by the state, under the influence of Mercantilism; a statutory privilege, not always effective in practice, in the case of Indian trade.

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National income: The total flow of goods and services (measured in monetary terms) which is produced in the economy of a state.

Per capita income: Income per head in the country.

Real income: The actual income affair taking into account things like price size etc. That is to say.

Productivity: The level of production in industry or agriculture after the input of capital and human resources.

7.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sec. 14.2

2) See Sec. 14.3

3) Your answer should refer to the increasing private business of the Company officials, role of the 'Free merchants' capitalists free trade, etc. See Sec. 14.4.

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sec. 14.6

2) See Section 7.8

3) Your answer should focus on the decline of the export of Indian manufactured goods to England, increase in export of raw materials from India to England, increase in export of English manufactured goods in India market, increase in company's territorial revenue, etc. See Sec. 14.7

4) i) Yes ii) Yes iii) No iv) No v) Yes

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UNIT 8 ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE

Structure

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to explain:

- how the British rule subordinated Indian economy for its own interests,
- about different stages of colonialism and methods of exploitation, and
- about the economic impact on Indian agriculture, industry etc. during the colonial period.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Colonialism created a society which was neither capitalist as in Britain nor was it pre-colonial or pre-capitalist. Thus, for example, India under British rule neither resembled capitalist Britain nor was it basically similar to Mughal India. The development of agrarian relations in India makes this aspect quite clear. For example, landlordism in both zamindari and ryotwari areas of British India was something new; it did not exist in Mughal India. It was the creation of British rule. It was the result of the colonial rulers' efforts to transform Indian agriculture. Indian agriculture was not capitalist but it had many capitalist elements; for example, property relations were capitalist. Land was now a private property which was freely bought and sold on a large scale.

The same capitalist process which produced economic development in England and made it an advanced capitalist country produced and maintained underdevelopment in India. Colonialism uproots old society and economy,

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but the new colonial society and economy is as much a barrier to modern economic development as is the old, pre-capitalist economy and society. The economic surplus in the colonial India is produced in many different ways from traditional agriculture to plantations to modern mining and factory production. But the essence of colonialism is appropriation of this surplus by various classes of the imperialist country England.

Colonialism may be divided into three distinct stages which were related to distinct forms of exploitation. Consequently, each stage represented a different pattern of subordination of colonial economy, society and polity.

8.2 FIRST STAGE OF COLONIALISM

This is described as the Period of Monopoly Trade and Direct Appropriation (or the Period of East India Company's Domination, 1757-1813). During the last half of the 18th century, India was conquered by a monopoly trading corporation– the East India Company. The Company had two basic objectives at this stage.

i) The first was to acquire a monopoly of trade with India. This meant that other English or European merchants or trading companies should not compete with it in purchase and sale of Indian products. Nor should the Indian merchants do so. This would enable the East India Company to buy Indian products as cheaply as possible and sell them in world markets at as high a price as possible. Thus India was exploited through monopoly trade. The English competitors were kept out by persuading the British Government to grant the East India Company through a Royal Charter a monopoly of the right to trade with India and the East. Against the European rivals the Company had to wage long and fierce wars on land and the sea. To acquire monopoly against Indian traders and to prevent Indian rulers from interfering with its trade, the Company took advantage of the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. After political conquest, Indian weavers were also employed directly by the Company. In that case, they were forced to produce cloth at below market prices.

ii) The second major objective of colonialism at this stage was to directly appropriate or take over governmental revenues through control over state power. The East India Company required large financial resources to wage wars in India and on the seas against European rivals and Indian rulers and to maintain naval forces, forts and armies around their trading posts, etc. East India Company did not possess such resources. The much needed financial resources had, therefore, to be raised in India from the Indian people.

Indian money was also needed to purchase Indian goods. The British produced hardly any goods which could be sold in India in competition with Indian products. British industrial products could not compete with Indian handicraft products till the beginning of the 19th century. British Government; heavily influenced by mercantilist theories, was also unhappy with the export of gold and silver from Britain. Appropriation of government revenue would also, of course, increase the profits of the East India Company and dividends of its shareholders. Both the objectives - the monopoly of

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trade and appropriation of government revenues - were rapidly fulfilled with the conquest first of Bengal and parts of South India and then over the years of the rest of India. The East India Company now used its political power to acquire monopolistic control over Indian trade and handicraft products. Indian traders were gradually replaced and ruined, while the weavers and other craftsmen were compelled either to sell their products at uneconomic rates or to work for the Company at low wages. The weavers were, for example, not ruined at this stage by British imports but because of the Company's monopoly and their exploitation by being forced to produce for the Company under uneconomic conditions. Moreover, both Company and its servants extorted illegally immense wealth from Indian merchants, officials, nobles, rulers and zamindars. Gradually, a large number of highly paid British officials were appointed in India and their salaries and pensions became a form of surplus appropriation.

8.3 SECOND STAGE OF COLONIALISM

This was a period of exploitation through trade and is also termed as 'Colonialism of Free Trade' during the 19th century. Immediately after the East India Company became the ruler over most parts of India, an intense struggle broke out in Britain to determine whose interests the newly acquired colony would serve. Britain was after 1750 undergoing the Industrial Revolution. The newly developing industrial capitalists began to attack the East India Company and the forms of its exploitation of India. They did not gain much from a monopoly trade in Indian products or from the Company's control over Indian revenues. They wanted India to serve as a market for their ever-increasing output of manufactured goods, especially textiles. They also needed India's raw materials, especially cotton, and food grains. Moreover, India could buy more British goods only if it earned foreign exchange by increasing its exports. The existing economic, political, administrative and socio-cultural setting was to be transformed for achieving this objective. The British Indian Government set out to do so after 1813. In the economic field this meant integrating India's colonial economy with the British and world capitalist economy. The chief instrument of this was the introduction of free trade. All import duties in India were either totally removed or drastically reduced to nominal rates. Thus India was thrown open to British manufactures. Free entry was also now given to British capitalists to develop tea, coffee and indigo plantations, and trade, transport, mining and modern industries in India. The British Indian Government gave active state help to these capitalists.

The agrarian structure of India was sought to be transformed in a capitalist direction through the Permanent Settlement and the Ryotwari systems. The large-scale imports and their sale in land and even more the large-scale export of the bulky raw materials and their gathering at the ports from long distances inside the country required a cheap and easy system of transport and communications. The Government, therefore, improved rivers and canals, encouraged the introduction of steamships on the rivers and improved the roads. Above all, during latter half of the 19th century, it encouraged and financed a large network of railways linking India's major cities and markets to its ports. By 1905, nearly 45,000 kms. of railways had been

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built. Similarly, a modern postal and telegraph system was introduced to facilitate economic transactions. The earlier forms of exploitation continued during this phase. This, plus the costly administration, plus the efforts at economic transformation led to a steep rise in taxation and in the burden on the peasant. Because of the constant needs of colonial administration for funds to maintain military and civil administration and for construction of railways, and its large reliance on taxation of land, which had its own limits, colonial administration suffered from constant financial constraint.

8.4 THIRD STAGE OF COLONIALISM

This is described as the Era of Foreign Investments and International Competition for Colonies. A new stage of colonialism was ushered in India from about 1860s. This was the result of several major changes in the world economy:

i) Spread of industrialization to several countries of Europe, the United States and Japan with the result that Britain's industrial supremacy in the world came to an end.

ii) There was intensification of industrialization as a result of the application of scientific knowledge to industry. Modern chemical industries, the use of petroleum as fuel for the internal combustion engine and the use of electricity for industrial purposes developed during this period.

iii) There was further unification of the world market because of revolution in the means of international transport.

The new industries in many industrialized countries consumed immense quantities of raw materials. Rapid industrial development also led to continuous expansion of urban population which needed more and more food. There now occurred an intense struggle for new, secure and exclusive markets and sources of agricultural and mineral raw materials and foodstuffs.

Moreover, the development of trade and industry at home and extended exploitation of colonies and semi-colonies produced large accumulations of capital in the capitalist countries. Simultaneously there occurred concentration of capital in fewer and fewer corporations, trusts and cartels and merger of banking capital with industrial capital. Outlets had to be found for this capital. This led to large scale export of capital. The strengthening of colonial rule over India was essential to keep out the rivals, to attract British capital to India and to provide it security. After 1850, a very large amount of British capital was invested in railways, loans to the Government of India, trade and to a lesser extent in plantations, coal mining, jute mills, shipping and banking in India.

Check your Progress 1

1) Briefly describe the Merchant Capital or Free Trade stage of colonialism.

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2) Discuss in about 100 words the basic forms of surplus extraction or exploitation during the second and third stages of colonialism in India.

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8.5 THE ECONOMIC CRITIQUE OF COLONIALISM BY THE NATIONALISTS

The nationalists in India in their scholarly and polemical writings offered a sharp and telling criticism of the colonial economic impact on India. Through the works of Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Gobind Ranade, Romesh Chandra Dutt and many others who developed a school of Economic Nationalist analysis which highlighted some important features of India's experience under British Rule.

i) The concept of Drain of Wealth evolved in the writings of Naoroji and Dutt. To them it meant the transfer of wealth from the late 18th century in the form of plunder and loot and illicit gains by servants of the East India Company and in the form of Home charges, i.e. the expenses incurred by the Government of India in England out of its income derived mainly from the taxation of the Indian people and finally, in the form of interests and profits and capital transfer from India to England on private account. This drain in forms impoverished this country and increased the economic gap between India and England.

ii) They also pointed out how British regime brought about the destruction of the small-scale industries of India.

iii) The idea of Free Trade and **laissez faire,** nationalists contended, led to a tariff and industrial policy which stifled the possibilities of growth of industries in British India. Consequently, India became "the agricultural farm" of industrial England, i.e. a source of raw materials and food-grains, dependent totally on industrial supplies from England.

iv) The rate of taxation of agriculture was also criticised by R.C. Dutt who felt that the burden of land revenue was excessive in areas which were subjected to periodical temporary settlements. This, in his opinion, was the cause of frequent recurrence of famines in British India. Wealth of the countryside was drained away through the revenue collection machinery, making the economic viability of farming so precarious that the farmer could not withstand any natural calamity.

v) Finally, an important part of the nationalist analysis of British economic policy in India was their criticism of government expenditure on the army, the police and other apparatus of government. The expenditure was so excessive that

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developmental investments were neglected. For example, the low expenditure on irrigation works contrasted sharply with the generous expenditure on the British Indian army, the railways, etc.

8.6 ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF COLONIAL RULE

You have read about the various stages of colonialism in the earlier sections. But how did these stages affect the Indian economy? The artisan, peasant, worker and merchant – practically all sections of the Indian society – were affected by colonial policies. In this section we shall deal with the concrete economic impact of colonialism.

8.6.1 De-industrialization

The destruction of traditional Indian industries was one of the earliest consequences of colonialism to be noticed and documented in India. In that early stage of mercantile capitalism the source of profit of the East Indian Company was the difference between the cost prices in India and the sale prices in England of the Indian Industrial products like cotton and silk textiles. This price difference, i.e. the profit rates of the English East India Company, could be increased if the Indian cost price, at which East Indian Company purchased goods from the Indian artisans, could be lowered. So long as the English East Indian Company was competing in the Indian market with other Companies of the French or the Dutch and with other merchants of Indian and Asian origin, the Indian artisans were in a good bargaining position. But in the last decades of the eighteenth century the British gradually eliminated most of their competitors, in particular the French and the Dutch. Moreover, by virtue of their military power and, in some regions (e.g. Bengal from 1765), their political and administrative position, the British established a hegemony which allowed them to become monopolists in the market.

The English Company's purchase together with the purchases of the servants of that company in their private capacity accounted for a very large portion of the marketed textiles of superior quality in Bengal. As we all know, a monopolist can influence the market to his own advantage. In the last three decades of the eighteenth century this was the advantage which enabled the English traders to reduce the prices paid to the indigenous artisans in India and thus to reap high profits from sale in the European market. This excessive exploitation of Indian artisans weakened the very basis of our handicraft industries by reducing the artisan to a low level of income. It also destroyed the possibility of accumulation of resources to invest in the industry and to improve its technology. As we know, accumulation of capital and a technological revolution occurred in England in the last decades of the eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century. This Industrial Revolution first of all wiped out the market for India's artisans in Europe. It was impossible for artisanal products to compete with factory products. By the beginning of the 19th century the staple industrial exports, cotton textiles, began to decline and soon they ceased to be exported. Some

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other items, e.g. indigo and raw silk continued to be exported though from 1813 it was no longer the East India Company but private trade which became the agency for exports. Not only was the export market of the Indian artisans taken away by the foreign factories, but the home market began to be invaded by imported factory products.

Here we may pay attention to the debate that has taken place on the question of destruction of handicrafts in India in course of the 19th century. Romesh C. Dutt and Madan Mohan Malviya (in his note of dissent to the Indian Industrial Commission) used the statistics of import to prove their point. They showed, for example, that import of Manchester cloth increased in value from 96 lakh sterling in 1860 to 27 crore sterling in 1900 in India. Some recent authors, particularly Morris David Morris, argue that this evidence is not decisive. They argue that under British rule the population increased, the per capita income increased, the sale of cloth increased due to change in consumption habits, and thus it was possible for Indians to buy more foreign cloth, leaving the market for indigenous artisans unaffected. In short, Morris's argument is that the market expanded so that it was possible to accommodate both Manchester and Indian Weaver's produce. Manchester cloth, Morris maintained, did not displace indigenous weaver's cloth. This view of Morris is unacceptable because he does not produce any evidence to prove increase in population and per capita income during the 19th century. There is plenty of evidence put forward by recent economic historians like Sarda Raju for Madras, N.K. Sinha for Bengal, A.V. Raman Rao for Andhra, R.D. Choksey for Maharashtra and A.K. Bagchi for Bihar, etc. which lends support to the de-industrialization thesis. In the middle Gangetic region, according to Bagchi's estimate, the industrial decline can be measured with some accuracy: the weight of industry in the livelihood pattern of the people was reduced by half from 1809-13 to the census year 1901.

Did the growth of new industrial activities in the last decade of the 19th century restore the balance? Daniel Thorner has put forward the controversial thesis that the census statistics available from 1881 do not suggest that de-industrialization was in progress from 1881 to 1931. At first sight, the census figures indicate that the male work-force in agriculture increased from 65% in 1881 to 72% in 1931, while the proportion in industry declined from 16% in 1881 to 9% in 1931. But Thorner believes that this categorisation was erroneous and one should lump together agricultural work force with another category, general labour and likewise aggregate industrial work-force with 'Trade'. If that is done, the picture looks different. The increase in the compounded categories appears to be far less in the primary sector (only about 2% growth between 1881 and 1931). Similarly the decline in industry and trade put together is also much less (only about 3% decline in 1881-1931). Further, Thorner dismisses the data on female labour force on the ground that the data collected were inaccurate in the opinion of census officials. In this way Thorner arrives at the conclusion that the 1881-1931 censuses do not show any evidence of substantial de-industrialization or destruction of indigenous industries.

In criticism of Thorner, one obvious point is that the process of de-industrialization had already done the damage well before the census

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operations began. The first reliable all India census was that of 1881. This much Thorner is himself willing to concede. Secondly, he is perhaps wrong in dismissing the figures-regarding employment of women. These figures for 1881-1931 show an increase in employment in Agriculture by 13% and a decline in Industrial employment by 9%. In the Indian social context the employment of women is quite significant, and it is likely that in case of decline in artisan's business the women of the household gave up industrial work (to take up household chores or agricultural labour) earlier than menfolk in the artisan families. Above all, there is the question: how reliable is the sector-wise distribution of work-force as an index of industrialization or its reverse? The crucial index is the per capita productivity and the value of what is produced as a proportion of national produce, i.e. ratio to national income. J. Krishnamurthy has, on this ground cast doubts upon the use of demographic data in answering the question, was there de-industrialization?

Lastly, we may note that there was also an important trend of imperialist apologists which frankly admitted the de-industrialization of India as a fact but argued that it was good for both India and Britain that the colony specialised in the production of agricultural goods. As late as 1911 Lord John Maynard Keynes wrote that industrializing India was neither possible nor desirable. India could, in fact, attain greater prosperity by exchanging agricultural products for all the industrial goods that may be needed through imports from the West. This view goes back to the classical theory of comparative advantage and international division of labour, assigning to colonies like India the role of the agricultural farm of the industrialized imperial country.

8.6.2 Famines in Colonial India

If colonialism meant destruction of old industries, did it mean the growth of agricultural production? The answer is probably negative on the whole. It is decidedly negative when we consider per capita and per acre productivity in food-grains from 1898 to 1947. As for the earlier fifty years, the repeated occurrence famines tell their own story. From the middle of the 19th century a number of famines devastated India. According to official estimates in these famines the total loss of life was at least 1 crore and 52 lakhs, and the total number of famine-affected people was 39.7 crores. These vast numbers indicate periods of subsistence crisis. The immediate cause for this undoubtedly was droughts and crop failure but the roots of the crises lay in what was the "normal" rate of agrarian production. The factors that contributed to famines were: Stagnation in agricultural technology, failure of investment to raise yield per acre, the drain of the agriculturists' resources into the hands of the revenue intermediaries and money lenders and dealers in agricultural commodities. The sparseness of government investments in irrigation and other developmental investments, and the rapid rise in population from 1920's were also responsible. A significant index of the normal situation in respect of food supply is the per capital availability of food-grains in India. We have three estimates in this regard for the period 1901 to 1943. In these years, according to George Blyn's estimate for British India, per capita food-grains availability declines from 0.23

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ton to 0.16 ton. According to Shivasubramanian's estimate for the whole undivided India the decline was from 0.2 ton to 0.14 ton. According to Alan Heston the decline was from ton 0.17 ton (1901) to 0.16 ton (1946). Thus all the estimates indicate that the supply of food grains declined in the last half-century of British rule though they differ on the extent to which it occurred.

8.6.3 Commercialization of Agriculture

As we have already seen, the food-grain production did not improve, but this was not true of some so-called 'cash crops'. Both the total and per acre output of non-food grain crops increased, and this was largely due to increased demand and rising prices of these both in the external and the internal market. The most dramatic increase of this sort was the Cotton Boom of the early 1860's which merits our special attention.

The emancipation of the black slaves by Abraham Lincoln and the consequent Civil War in U.S.A. led to a massive short-fall in the world supply of cotton in 1860-64. This led to the increase in cotton prices, export of cotton from India, and the growth on cotton cultivating acreage in India. This Cotton Boom brought the Indian peasants in Cotton growing areas within the ambit of the world capitalist system. The important export houses of Bombay, the wholesale traders in the big cities, the brokers and other middlemen in cotton export trade, down to the level of the village **bania** who advanced credit to the peasant for cotton cultivation, all profited enormously from the Cotton Boom. This profit, as well as the profit from the commercial crops developed even earlier, viz. opium and indigo, contributed to the accumulation of capital in the hands of some Indian businessmen. More important was the fact that the Cotton Boom marked the recruitment of India as a supplier of agricultural commodities and raw material needed by the industrialized West. Thus it complemented the process of de-industrialization. The role of the colony specialising in agriculture and of the industrialized country in the West were demarcated clearly in the contemporary theory of international division of labour. This was characteristic not only of India and England, but also of other colonies and imperialist countries.

The statistics of agricultural production indicate a substantial increase in non-food grains output while food grain production shows an opposite trend. The per annum increase in population in 1891-1947 was 0.67% while total food-grain production increased by only 0.11% in this period. The per acre production of food-grains decreased by 0.18% per annum. On the other hand the increased demand in the market and the rising prices of highly commercialized non-food grain crops increased by 0.86% per annum and their total output by 1.31% per annum. The non-food grain crops were primarily cotton and jute but also included tobacco, sugarcane, oilseeds etc.

8.6.4 Impact of Commercialization on Rural Society

Commercialization of agriculture paved the way for the generation of usury and merchant capital in rural society and widened the levels

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of differentiation among the peasantry. The common cultivator's dependence on the village **bania** for advance of credit increased. The peasant needed credit for the marketing of his crop, for loans during lean seasons for subsistence increased as commercialization progressed. In the payment of land revenue also the money lender-cum-trader played an important role in supplying cash. Finally, the village **bania** was also an agent for the penetration of the rural market by the imported industrial consumer goods, particularly Manchester cloth.

While some of the poorer peasants were raising crops for the market virtually hypothecated in advance to the money lender, the better-off section of the peasantry was relatively free. The latter could store their goods, and wait for better prices than what prevailed during the glut in the market after harvest. They could also cart their crops to markets in towns to obtain a better price than what the village ***bania*** or itinerant ***dalal*** offered. Furthermore, they could make their own decision as to which crop to grow while the poorest farmer was virtually forced to raise crops as demanded by the village ***bania*****.** In some regions, the rich peasants themselves became money lenders to poorer peasants and thus the process of differentiation was accentuated.

In course of this differentiation process and the operation of money-trading capital, an increasing number of peasants began losing their land and becoming landless labourers. It must, however, be noted that landless labourers had existed in the pre-colonial-period too (particularly in the south of India in substantial numbers on account of servitude of some castes). It is the economic process of dispossession of land and the significantly larger number of landless agriculturists which emerge as the characteristic features of the colonial period.

According to estimates based on the 1931 census we get the following picture of social strata in village India. At the bottom of the pyramid were the landless agricultural labourers (including bonded labourers) accounting for 37.8% of agriculturists. The stratum above them were the farmers with very small holdings of below 5 acres (9%) and various types of tenants-at-will and share croppers (24.3%). The layer above consisted of the better-off section of farmers with land above 5 acres in size (about 25.3%). Finally at the narrow top of the pyramid were members of the rent receiving class, many of whom did not actually cultivate land themselves (3.6%). The condition of the bonded labourers was the worst: they worked all their life, and sometimes for generations, for the 'master'.

8.7 MODERN INDUSTRY AND INDIAN CAPITALIST CLASS

The pattern of imperialism included an agenda of action by the colonial state for promoting the development of an economic infrastructure for the exploitation of the natural resources and raw materials of the colony. We shall turn to that aspect very soon. Suffice it to say that these infrastructural developments, particularly the railways and transport system, created conditions of development not only for foreign capital in

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some sectors (e.g. jute factories, coal mines, tea and coffee plantations) but also for indigenous capital. The latter invested first in cotton textiles, in the teeth of the opposition of Manchester interests and the inimical tariff policy of the British Indian Government. From 1854 when the first Indian mill was set up in Bombay till the World War I the progress of Indian industrial capital was painfully slow and halting. It was the War and the inter-war period which saw the rapid development and industrial diversification of Indian Capital. This development was in part the story of struggle against foreign capitalist domination (most pronounced in eastern India). It also involved a struggle against British business interests which exercised powerful influence on policy-making in England and also against the unsympathetic British Indian Government. This would explain the emergence of alliance between the Indian capitalist class and the nationalist leadership who fully supported national capital.

Within a colonial context the growth of national capital was obviously subject to severe limitations. The potentials of colonial industrial development were exceedingly limited. From Shivasubramanian's estimates of national income it is clear how small was the extent of industrial growth even in the last fifty years of British rule. On the average the ratio of industrial sector's share to the Net Domestic Product was 12.7% in 1900-1904, 13.6% in 1915-19, and 16.7% in 1940-44. That India virtually remained where it was.-predominantly agricultural, is clear from the ratio of income generated in the primary sector to the total NDP**:** 63.6% in 1900-04, 59.6% in I 915-19, 47.6% in 1940-44. The Tertiary Sector alone showed a striking increase in its share: 23.7% in 1900-1904 compared to 35.7% in 1940-1944.

In common with many other colonial and industrially backward countries, India was characterised by stagnation in the level of national income. In the early years of British rule we have no index of national income. In the 1860s, according to Dadabhai Naoroji's calculation, the per capita income of India was Rs. 20 per annum. We have already seen how Naoroji and others nationalists identified the Drain of Wealth from India as one of the causes of this poverty in India. About this time, 1870 to be exact, the per capita income in England (Mitchell and Deane's estimate) was £ 24.4 sterling. This was equivalent to Rs. 568.

The more recent estimates of Shivasubramanian suggest that in the last half century of British rule per capita income in India remained almost stagnant. In 1900-04 it was Rs. 52, in 1915-19 it was Rs. 57.3 and in 1940-44 it was Rs. 56.6 (at constant price of 1938-39). This gives us an idea of the degree of underdevelopment and stagnation from which colonial India suffered.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write briefly bout the contribution of early nationalist leaders towards an understanding of economic impact of colonialism.

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2) On what grounds do Morris David Morris and Danial Thorner attempt to disprove the hypothesis of de industrialization? Do you agree with their views?

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3) Discuss the effects of commercialization on the lives of peasants during colonial times.

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8.8 LET US SUM UP

The nature of colonial rule and its impact on the colony have been analysed differently by different scholars. The Indian nationalist scholars like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and R.C. Dutt spoke mainly about the Indian context and pointed out the impact of the British rule on the Indian economy. They emphasised the drain of wealth and de-industrialization as the ill-effects of the British rule. Other aspects of colonialism in India were the commercialization of agriculture and a slow and uneven pace of industrialization. Indian economic advance was geared towards the requirements of colonialism and the colonial State played an active role in shaping the Indian economy so as to serve the imperial interests.

8.9 KEYWORDS

Capitalism: An economic and political system in which property business and industry are privately owned and where competition is the mainstay of the economy.

Dalal: Middleman.

Differentiation: Break-up of the peasantry into classes as a result of certain sections prospering at the expense of others within the same class.

Demographic Data: Figures regarding population.

Mercantalist theory: A political and economic philosophy according to which the main aim of the nation state was to maximise exports, minimise imports and accumulate as much bullion (gold and silver) as possible.

Net Domestic Product (NDP): Cumulative National Product from industry, agriculture and the service sector.

Output: Total volume of production.

Per Acre Production: Production divided by each acre of land under the plough.

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Per Capita Income: Net National Income divided by population.

Per Capita Production: The rate of production after being divided by total population.

Primary Sector: Agriculture, fishery, animal husbandry and forest-produce.

Productivity: Producing capacity.

Share croppers: A class of agriculturists who cultivated and managed other peoples' land and shared the crop, in return.

Tenants-at-will: The class of old peasant proprietors, now turned into tenants on the land of newly created Zamindars who could now evict the former at their will for failing to pay the rent.

Tertiary Sector: Service Sector including trade and transport.

Village Bania: Class of rural money lenders who also sometimes acted as intermediaries between the cultivators and the market.

8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 8.2
2) See Section 8.3 and 8.4

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 8.5
2) See Sub-section 8.6.1
3) See Sub-section 8.6.4

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UNIT 9 SOCIAL-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Structure

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will:

- know why and how various reforms were initiated in India,
- understand who were the leading reformers and their ideas about the nature of the Indian society, and
- grasp the scope and methods of these reforms and highlight their shortcomings.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

India in the 19th century witnessed a series of reform movements undertaken in various parts of the country. These movements were oriented toward a re-

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structuring of the Indian society along modern lines. This unit presents a general and analytical view of these socioreligious reform movements. It also seeks to highlight the significance of these movements.

The conquest of India by the British during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exposed some serious weaknesses and drawbacks of Indian social institutions. As a consequence several individuals and movements sought to bring about changes in the social and religious practices with a view to reforming and revitalizing the society. An important question for discussion is about the forces which generated this awakening, in India. Was this a result of the impact of the West? Or was it only a response to the colonial intervention? Another dimension of this is related to the changes taking place in Indian society leading to the emergence of new classes. For this perspective the socio-religious movements can be viewed as the expression of the social aspirations of the newly emerging middle class in colonial India. The early historical writings on reform movements have traced their origins primarily to the impact of the West, particularly to English education and literature, Christianity, Orientalist research, European science and philosophy, and the material elements of Western civilization. The importance of Western impact on the regenerative process in the society in nineteenth century is undeniable. However, if we regard this entire process of reform as a manifestation of colonial benevolence and limit ourselves to viewing only its positive dimensions, we shall fail to do justice to the complex character of the phenomenon. The reform movements should be seen as a response to the challenge posed by the colonial intrusion. They were indeed important not just as attempts to reform society but even more so as manifestations of the urge to contend with the new situation engendered by colonialism.

9.2 METHOD AND SCOPE OF REFORMS

The reform movements of the nineteenth century were not purely religious movements. They were socio-religious movements. The reformers like Rammohan Roy in Bengal, Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokhitavadi) in Maharashtra and Veeresalingam in Andhra advocated religious reform for the sake of "Political advantage and social comfort". The reform perspectives of the movements and their leaders were characterised by recognition of inter-connection between religious and social issues. They attempted to make use of religious ideas to bring about changes in social institutions and practices. For example, Keshub Chandra Sen, interpreted the "unity of godhead and brotherhood of mankind" to eradicate caste distinctions in society.

The major social problems which came within the purview of the reform movements were:

- Emancipation of women in which sati, infanticide, child and widow marriage were taken up
- Casteism and untouchability
- Education for bringing about enlightenment in society

In the religious sphere the main issues were:

- Idolatry

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- Polytheism
- Religious superstitions
- Exploitation by priests

In the attempts to reform the socio-religious practices several methods were adopted. Four major trends are as follows:

9.2.1 Reforms from Within

The technique of reform from within was initiated by Rammohan Roy and followed throughout the nineteenth century. The advocates of this method believed that any reform in order to be effective had to emerge from within the society itself. As a result, the main thrust of their efforts was to create a sense of awareness among the people. They tried to do this by publishing tracts and organizing debates and discussions on various social problems. Rammohun's campaign against sati, Vidyasagar's pamphlets on widow marriage and B.M. Malabari's efforts to increase the age of consent are the examples of this.

9.2.2 Reforms through Legislation

The second trend was represented by a faith in the efficacy of legislative intervention. The advocates of this method (Keshub Chandra Sen in Bengal, Mahadev Govind Ranade in Maharashtra and Veeresalingam in Andhra) believed that reform efforts cannot really be effective unless supported by the state. Therefore, they appealed to the government to give legislative sanction for reforms like widow marriage, civil marriage and increase in the age of consent. They, however, failed to realize that the interest of the British government in social reform was linked with its own narrow politico-economic considerations and that it would intervene only if it did not adversely affect its own interests. Moreover, they also failed to realize that the role of the legislation as an instrument of change in a colonial society was limited because the lack of sanction of the people.

9.2.3 Reforms through Symbol of Change

The third trend was an attempt to create symbols of change through non-conformist individual activity. This was limited to the 'Derozians' or 'Young Bengal' who represented a radical stream within the reform movement. The members of this group prominent of them being Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Ram Gopal Ghose and Krishna Mohan Banerji, stood for a rejection of tradition and revolt against accepted social norms. They were highly influenced by "the regenerating new thought from the West" and displayed an uncompromisingly rational attitude towards social problems. A major weakness of the method they adopted was that it failed to draw upon the cultural traditions of Indian society and hence the newly emerging middle class in Bengal found it too unorthodox to accept.

9.2.4 Reforms through Social Work

The fourth trend was reform through social work as was evident in the activities of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission. There was a clear recognition among them of the limitations of purely intellectual effort if undertaken without supportive social

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work. Vidyasagar, for instance, was not content with advocating widow re-marriage through lectures and publication of tracts. He identified himself with the cause of widow marriage and spent his entire life, energy and money for this cause. Despite that, all he was able to achieve was just a few widow marriages. Vidyasagar's inability to achieve something substantial in practical terms was an indication of the limitations of social reform effort in colonial India. The Arya Samaj and the Ramakrishna Mission also undertook social work through which they tried to disseminate ideas of reform and regeneration. Their limitation was an insufficient realization on their part that reform on the social and intellectual planes is inseparably linked with the overall character and structure of the society. As compared to the other reform movements, they depended less on the intervention of the colonial state and tried to develop the idea of social work as a creed.

9.3 MAIN STIMULATING IDEAS

Two important ideas which influenced the leaders and movements were rationalism and religious universalism.

9.3.1 Rationalism

A rationalist critique of socio-religious reality generally characterized the nineteenth century reforms. The early Brahmo reformers and members of 'Young Bengal' had taken a highly rational attitude towards socio-religious issues. Akshay Kumar Dutt, who was an uncompromising rationalist, had argued that all natural and social phenomena could be analysed and understood by our intellect purely in terms of physical and mechanical processes. Faith was sought to be replaced by rationality and socio-religious practices were evaluated from the standpoint of social utility. In Brahmo Samaj the rationalist perspective led to the repudiation of the infallibility of the Vedas and in Aligarh movement founded by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, to the reconciling of the teaching of Islam with the needs and requirements of modern age.

Although reformers drew upon scriptural sanction, e.g., Rammohan's argument for the abolition of sati and Vidyasagar's for widow marriage, social reforms were not always subjected to religious considerations. A rational and secular outlook was very much evident in positing an alternative to the then prevalent social practices. In advocating widow marriage and opposing polygamy and child marriage, Akshay Kumar was least concerned with searching for any religious sanction or finding out whether they existed in the past. His arguments were mainly based on their noticeable effects on society. Instead of depending on the scriptures, he cited medical opinion against child marriage.

Compared to other regions there was less dependence on religion in Maharashtra. To Gopal Hari Deshmukh whether social reforms had the sanction of religion was immaterial. If religion did not sanction them he advocated that religion itself be changed.

9.3.2 Universalism

An important religious idea in the nineteenth century was universalism a belief in the unity of godhead and an emphasis on religions being

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essentially the same. Rammohan considered different religions as national embodiments of universal theism and he had initially conceived Brahmo Samaj as a Universalist Church. Sayyid Ahmad Khan echoed almost the same idea: all prophets had the same *deen* (faith) and every country and nation had different prophets. This perspective found clearer articulation in Keshub Chandra Sen who tried to synthesise the ideas of all major religions in the breakaway Brahmo group, Nav Bidhan that he had organized. The Universalist perspective was not a purely philosophic concern; it strongly influenced political and social outlook. Even to the famous Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterji, who is credited with a Hindu outlook, dharma rather than specific religious affiliation was the criterion for determining the superiority of one individual over the other. However, faced with the challenge of colonial culture and ideology, universalism, instead of providing the basis for the developing of a broader secular ethos, retreated into religious particularism.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Read the following statements and mark right (✓) or wrong (×)

   i) The reform movements of the 19th century were purely religious movements.

   ii) Different reform movements emerged in different parts of the country at the same time.

   iii) The initiative for these reform movements was taken in Bengal.

   iv) Young Bengal' represented the radical stream within the reform movement.

2) Write brief notes on: (a) Rationalism, (b) Universalism.

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9.4 MAJOR REFORM MOVEMENTS

The earliest expression of reform was in Bengal, initiated by Rammohan Roy. He founded the Atmiya Sabha in 1814, which was the forerunner of Brahmo Samaj organized by him in 1829. The spirit of reform soon manifested itself in other parts of the country. The Paramahansa Mandali and Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra and Arya Samaj in Punjab and other parts of north India were some of the prominent movements among the Hindus. There were several other regional and caste movements like Kayastha Sabha in U.P. and Sarin Sabha in Punjab. Among the backward castes too reformation struck roots: The Satya Shodhak Samaj in Maharashtra and Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sabha in Kerala. The Ahmadiya and Aligarh movements, the Singh Sabha and the Rehnumai Mazdeyasan Sabha represented the spirit of reform among the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Parsees respectively.

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9.4.1 Ideas of Rammohan Roy

Rammohan Roy has been aptly described as the Father of Modern India. A multifaceted personality as he was, he touched upon nearly every aspect of national life and struggled for the re-generation of Indian nation. He learned several languages and was an erudite scholar of his times. He published his first philosophical work, *Tuhfat-ul Muwahhidin* (A Gift to Monotheists) in 1805 in which he analysed the major religions of the world in the light of 'reason' and 'social comfort'. He denied that religion was merely a matter of faith outside reason and attempted to expose the myth of miracles associated with it. Rammohan Roy's reform activities were accelerated after he settled down in Calcutta in 1814. He started the Atmiya Sabha and carried on consistent struggle against the religious and social malpractices. He denounced idolatry and advocated monotheism. He blamed the Brahman priests for perpetuating religious evils by keeping people ignorant about the true teachings of the indigenous scriptures. To educate the people he published the Bengali translation of some of the scriptures and profusely wrote in defence of monotheism. His translations into and writings in the vernacular promoted the growth of Bengali language.

Rammohan Roy remained a rationalist during the entire period of his intellectual life. In T*uhfat* his rationalism was in full bloom. Even in his later writings reason retains its rightful place as the touchstone of reality. Although later he sought the support of the scriptures that was to promote reform of Hindu society. In 1828 he established a new society, the Brahmo Sabha which later came to be known as the Brahmo Samaj. His primary purpose was to rid Hinduism of its evils and to preach monotheism. It incorporated the best teachings of other religions and acted as a powerful platform for the advocacy of humanism, monotheism and social regeneration.

Rammohan was extremely pained at the prevailing social degeneration. In particular he was concerned with the pitiable plight of women in society. He launched a crusade against the evil practice of Sati, the burning of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. His agitation bore fruit finally in 1829 when Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India, enacted a law against that practice. However, the solution which he put forward for the living widows was not widow-marriage but ascetic widowhood. He condemned polygamy, early marriage and opposed the subjugation of women and their inferior status in society. He related their problems to the root cause of absence of property rights. To him, female education was another effective method to free from social stagnation. He propagated the introduction and spread of modern education which could act as a major vehicle for the dissemination of modern ideas in the country. For its promotion he provided enthusiastic support to David Hare who, along with many Indian notables of Calcutta, founded the famous Hindu College in 1817. He also ran an English School in Calcutta at his own cost. In 1825 he founded the Vedanta College which offered both Indian and Western learning.

Rammohan laid stress on India's need for Western scientific knowledge, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences. He understood the causes underlying the development of Western intellectual progress and wanted Indians to acquire the fruits of Europe's

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progress. His goal was the fusion of the best in the East and the West. Rammohan took up not only social and religious problems but also political and economic issues of the times. He stood for the Indianisation of services, trial by jury, separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary, freedom of the press, and judicial equality between Indians and Europeans. He criticized the Zamindari system for its oppressive practices. Rammohan was a progenitor of nationalist consciousness, and ideology in India. His every effort of social and religious reform was aimed at nation-building. Through his reform he wished to lay the foundations for the unity of Indian society, divided into divergent groups. In particular he attacked the rigidities of the caste system which, according to him, had been the source of disunity among Indians. He held that the monstrous caste system created inequality and division among the people on the one hand, and 'deprived them of patriotic feeling' on the other.

9.4.2 Debendranath and Keshab Chandra

In the meanwhile the impetus to reform given by Rammohan had lost much of its momentum. Debendranath Tagore, father of Rabindranath Tagore, again put life into it. In 1839 he established the Tattvabodhini Sabha to carry on Rammohan's ideals independent of the Brahmo Samaj. It aimed at counteracting the rapid progress of Christianity in India and advocated the development of Vedantism. Under the aegis of the Tattvabodhini Sabha emphasis on indigenous language and culture became much more pronounced. Bengali texts in all subjects were published. Tattvabodhini Press was established and in 1843 the Tattvabodhini Patrika, a journal of the organization was started for the propagation of ideas. Debendranath Tagore became a Brahmo in 1843 and he reorganized the Brahmo Samaj in the same year. Another great intellectual associated with the Brahmo Samaj was Keshab Chandra Sen. Keshab laid stress on female emancipation. He emphasised universalism as against Debendranath's stress on national Hindu identity. Despite doctrinal differences among themselves the Brahmosamajists collectively contributed to the propagation of Rammohan's ideas and changing Bengal's society. They denounced priestly intermediation in religious matters and stood for the worship of one God. They supported widow marriage, monogamy and women's education.

9.4.3 Vidyasagar and Vivekananda

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. A great at Sanskrit scholar, Vidyasagar became the principal of the Sanskrit College in 1851. He introduced the study of western thought in the Sanskrit College and opened its gates to non-Brahmin students. He wrote a Bengali Primer and helped evolve a distinct modern prose style in Bengali. His great contribution, however, lay in the field of female emancipation. Widow marriage was the specific social issue he devoted his entire life to. His agitation for legalising the re-marriage of widows fetched support of the enlightened sections from various parts of the country and finally such a law was enacted. Under the supervision of Vidyasagar the first legal Hindu widow-marriage among the upper castes in India was celebrated in 1856. Through his endeavours nearly 25 widow marriages were solemnised between 1855 and 1860. This was certainly a

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major breakthrough in the history of radical social reform, and was a great advance from Rammohan's idea of ascetic widowhood. He promoted the higher education of women for their general uplift. As Secretary to the Bethune School, founded in Calcutta in 1849, he was instrumental in leading the movement for women's education. He also campaigned against child-marriage and polygamy.

The last of the great thinkers of 19th century Bengal who created a stir in Hindu society was Narendra Nath Datta, known as Swami Vivekananda. His guru or spiritual preceptor was Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1834-1886). Ramakrishna stressed universalism in religions and denounced religious particularism. However, his primary concern remained with religious salvation and not social salvation. His message was popularised inside and outside India by his famous disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). Vivekananda condemned the caste system and people's obsession with rituals and superstitions. In 1896 he founded the Ramakrishna Mission to carry on humanitarian and social work. The main motto of the Mission was to provide social service to the people, and it carried on its mission by opening schools, hospitals, orphanages, libraries, etc. in different parts of the country.

9.4.4 Reforms in Western India

The first soundings of intellectual revolt in Maharashtra were heard in the early decades of the 19th century. Among the early intellectuals who initiated and led the movement, the most prominent were Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1812-l846), Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar (1814-1882) and Bhasker Pandurang Tarkhadkar (1816-1847) Gopal Hari Deshmukh better known as 'Lokahitwadi' (1823-1882) and Vishnu Bhikaji Gokhale (1825-1873), popularly known as Vishnubawa Brahmochari, for he remained a life-long bachelor. Jambhekar was the pioneer of the intellectual movement in Maharashtra. He laid its foundations through his numerous writings, in the early 1830s. Dadoba gave it an organizational shape; he founded the Paramhansa Sabha in 1840, the first reform organization of nineteenth century Maharashtra. Bhaskar Pandurang distinguished himself as the militant nationalist critic of the colonial rule in India. It was he who first articulated the exploitative character of the British rule in India. He wrote in 1841 a series of eight long letters in the Bombay Gazette, one of the oldest newspapers in the Presidency, and exposed nearly every aspect of colonial domination.

The main contribution of Lokahitwadi was in broadening the scope of the movement In the Prabhakar, a Marathi Weekly, he wrote his hundred letters, the famous 'Shatpatre', between 1848 and 1850. This constituted the magnum opus of the early intellectual endeavours in Maharashtra. These letters taken together are all encompassing in dimension; there is hardly any aspect of the society which is left untouched. Brahmochari was against caste distinctions and believed in the oneness of humanity. Although himself a Brahmin, he employed a Muslim cook and ate food served by anyone. He thus openly challenged the rigidity of the caste system and worked for an equitable social order.

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In Bengal the movement had begun with a religious and philosophical note, in Maharashtra strictly social issues came to occupy a prominent place in the scheme of reform. The early intellectuals of Maharashtra were not essentially religious thinkers, concerned with the philosophical subtleties. Their approach was much practical in nature. For example, the Paramhansa Sabha's principal objective was the demolition of all caste distinctions. Each new recruit to the Sabha had to undergo initiation ceremony, and take the pledge that he would not observe any caste distinctions. He had to eat a slice of bread baked by a Christian and drink water at the hands of a Muslim. The Sabha was, however, a secret society; its meetings were conducted in the strictest secrecy for fear of facing the wrath of the orthodox. The challenge to the caste system and other social evils thus remained limited to the participation of its few members only.

9.4.5 Later Phase of Nineteenth Century

The reform movement gained strength during the second half of the century. A host of towering personalities emerged on the intellectual scene. The most notable among them were Vishnu Parashram Shastri Pandit (1827-1876), Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890), Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925), Narayan Mahadev Permanand (1838-1893), Mahadev Gobind Ranade (1842-1901), Vishnushastri Chiplunkar (1850-1882), K.T. Telang (1850-18932, Ganesh Vasudev Joshi (1851-1911), Narayan Ganesh Chandavarkar (1855-1923) and Gopal Ganesh Agarkar (1856-1895).

Pandit began his public career with the advocacy of widow-marriage. He was a leading figure in the sphere of the agitation for female emancipation. He started the Vidhava Vivaha Uttejaka Mandal (Society for Encouragement of Widow Marriage) in 1865 and worked as its Secretary. He set an example by marrying a widow in 1875. Phule, born in the Mali caste, emerged as a champion of the depressed sections of the society. He was the first Indian to start a school for the untouchables in 1854. He also championed the cause of the liberation of Indian women. In 1851 he and his wife started a girls' school at Poona. Bhandarkar earned the title of 'Maharshi' for himself: In the teeth of conservative opposition he allowed and arranged the marriage of his widow-daughter in 1891. He was one of the very few to strongly advocate Hindu Muslim unity. Paramanand, writing under the pen name of the 'Political recluse', was one of the constructive critics of the British administration, besides being a great social reformer. Ranade was a man of many-sided activity. A product of the Elphinstone College, Bombay, he was Judge of the Bombay High Court during 1891-1901. He held that the caste distinction was the main blot on Indian social system. He realised that social reform movement could not move the people unless it assimilated religious reform. Under his guidance the Paramhansa Sabha was reorganized in 1867 under the name Prarthana Samaj. He guided the movement in Maharashtra with intellectual strength and pragmatism till the end of his life. The Prarthana Samaj preached monotheism and denounced priestly domination and caste distinctions. Its activities also spread to South India through the efforts of the Telugu reformer, Veeresalingam.

Chiplunkar started his famous Nibandhmala in 1874, a monthly Marathi magazine, devoted to the cause of social reform. He died very young at

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the age of 32. Telang was instrumental in introducing compulsory primary education in Bombay. He was the first Indian Vice-Chancellor. Joshi greatly identified himself in the sphere of politics. He provided a brilliant critique of the economic policy of the British government. He was, however, one with other intellectuals in emphasising education to be the most effective agent of social change. Chandavarkar, basically a philosopher, was a great leader of the Prarthana Samaj. Agarkar was an iconoclast and uncompromising rationalist. He was very pungent in his denunciation of any blind dependence on tradition or false deification of India's past.

Other reformers in Bombay were Naoroji Furdonji, Dadabhai Naoroji and S.S. Bengalee. In 1851 they started a religious association called the Rehnumai Mazadayasan Sabha. It stood for the modernisation of Parsi religion and social customs. It launched a struggle for the introduction and spread of education among women, grant of a legal status to them and for uniform laws of inheritance and marriage for the Parsi community.

9.4.6 Arya Samaj

The social and religious reform in North India was spearheaded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) who founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. Swami attacked idolatry, polytheism, Brahmin-sponsored religious rites and superstitious practices. He stood for adult and inter-caste marriages and female education. However, his bent towards the Vedas which he regarded as infallible gave his teachings an orthodox hue. The Arya Samajists played a progressive role in furthering the cause of social reform in North India. They worked for the improvement in the condition of women, advocated social equality and denounced untouchability and caste-rigidities. Although the Vedas were venerated as infallible, the reforms advocated were the product of modern rational thinking.

9.4.7 Sayyad Ahmed Khan

The movement for reform arose relatively later among the Indian Muslims only after the 1860s. Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) urged the Muslims to reject the decadent medieval thought, and to imbibe modern scientific knowledge and outlook. He condemned the custom of polygamy, and advocated removal of purdah and spread of education among women. He taught tolerance and urged the people to develop rational outlook and freedom of thought. He was greatly concerned with the promotion of modern education for which he worked throughout his life. In 1875 he founded the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh for the spread of Western education. Later this developed into the Aligarh Muslim University. He viewed the Quran as the most authoritative and rational religious text for the Muslims. He respected all religions and spoke against religious fanaticism and bigotry. Some of his followers desisted from joining the emerging national movement and believed that the two communities might develop along separate paths.

9.4.8 Veeresalingam and Reform in South India

In the South of India a leading light of the social reform movement in the early stages was Kandukari Veeresalingam (1848-1919). Unlike many of his contemporaries in the social reform movement in Calcutta or Bombay,

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Veeresalingam was born in a poor family; by profession he was a school teacher for the major part of his life. Prolific in writing, he produced a large number of tracts and pamphlets on social reform in the Telugu language. Hence he is claimed to be the father of modern Telugu prose literature. His missionary zeal on issues like re-marriage of widows, female education and generally on the upliftment of women and removal of social vices made him the father-figure of the later generation of Andhra social reformers.

9.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF REFORM MOVEMENTS

In the evolution of modern India the reform movements of the nineteenth century have made very significant contribution. They stood for the democratization of society, removal of superstition and abhorrent customs, spread of enlightenment and the development of a rational and modern outlook. Among the Muslims the Aligarh and Ahmadiya movements were the torch bearers of these ideas. Ahmadiya movement which took a definite shape in 1890 due to the inspiration of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, opposed jihad, advocated fraternal relations among the people and championed Western liberal education. The Aligarh movement tried to create a new social ethos among the Muslims by opposing polygamy and by advocating widow marriage. It stood for a liberal interpretation of the Quran and propagation of Western education.

The reform movements within the Hindu community attacked a number of social and religious evils. Polytheism and idolatry which negated the development of individuality or supernaturalism and the authority of religious leaders which induced the habit of conformity were subjected to strong criticism by these movements. The opposition to caste was not only on moral and ethical principles but also because it fostered social division. Anti-casteism existed only at a theoretical and limited level in early Brahmo movement, but movements like the Arya Samaj. Prarthana Samaj and Rama Krishna Mission became uncompromising critics of the caste system more trenchant criticism of the caste system was made by movements which emerged among the lower castes. They unambiguously advocated the abolition of caste system, as evident from the movements initiated by Jotibha Phule and Narayana Guru. The latter gave the call– only one God and one caste for mankind.

The urge to improve the condition of women was not purely humanitarian; it was part of the quest to bring about the progress of society. Keshub Chandra Sen had voiced this concern: “no country on earth ever made sufficient progress in civilization whose females were sunk in ignorance”. An attempt to change the then prevalent values of the society is evident in all these movements.

9.6 WEAKNESSES AND LIMITATIONS

Though the nineteenth century reform movements aimed at ameliorating the social, educational and moral conditions and habits of the people of India in different parts of the country, they suffered from several weaknesses and limitations. They were primarily urban phenomena. With the exception of Arya Samaj, the lower caste movements which had a broader influence, on

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the whole the reform movements were limited to upper castes and classes. For instance, the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal was concerned with the problems of the bhadralok and the Aligarh movement with those of the Muslim upper classes. The masses generally remained unaffected. Another limitation lay in the reformers' perception of the nature of the British rule and its role toward India. They believed quite erroneously, that the British rule was God-sent and would lead India to the path of modernity. Although they perceived the socioreligious aspects of the Indian society very accurately, its political aspect that of a basically exploitative British rule was missed by the reformers.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Explain in brief Rammohan Roy's views on religion and the condition of women in India.

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2) Discuss the major trends of socio-religious reform movements in Western India during the 19th century.

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9.7 LET US SUM UP

The 19th century reformers undertook a two-fold task. A critique of the Indian society was made. Institutions like caste, Sati, widowhood, child marriage etc. came in for a sharp attack. Superstitions and religious obscurantism were condemned. An attempt was made at the modernisation of the Indian society and appeals were made to reason, rationalism and tolerance. The scope of their activities was not confined to religion only but included the society as a whole. Although they devised different methods and were also separated by time, they showed a remarkable unity of perspective and objectives. To sum up, the identification of the socio-cultural evils constituted an important starting point for the nineteenth century attempt at social renewal. The degraded position of women, child marriage, sati, polygamy, enforced widowhood, caste system, untouchability, idolatry, polytheism, ritualism, priesthood and other superstitions prevalent in the society were brought under severe intellectual attack in varying degrees. The identification of the existing defects was interwoven with an attempt to renovate the social order. The upliftment of the position of women, abolition of infant marriage, monogamy, widow marriage, elimination of caste distinctions, monotheism, spiritual worship and the end of social bigotry

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and superstitions were the goals of the reformers by and large, although each individual mentioned above did not promote each and every one of the goals. The underlying concern was the all-round progress of Indian society on the foundations of a reformed socio-cultural system.

9.8 KEY WORDS

Revivalism: An attempt to revive and glorify the past.

Sati: The custom of the burning of a widow on the funeral pyre of her husband.

Idolatry: Practice of image worship.

Polytheism: Belief in many Gods.

Infanticide: The killing of an infant child.

Age of Consent Bill: A bill passed to increase the marriageable age of girls to 12 years.

Monotheism: Belief in one God.

Rationalism: Person who judges all religious belief and practice in terms of reason and logic.

Universalism: No discrimination on the basis of caste, creed or community.

9.9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) (i) × (ii) ✓ (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓

2) See Section 9.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-section 9.4.1

2) Se Sub-section 9.4.4

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UNIT 10 EMERGENCE AND GROWTH OF NATIONALISM

Structure

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- list the main factors which helped the growth of national consciousness,
- explain the way Indian middle class responded to the challenge of colonial rule,
- assess how the national consciousness took an organized form,
- understand the role played by the educated Indians in the formation of Congress.
- describe the controversies surrounding the origin of Indian National Congress and character of the early Congress, and
- know about the rise of Swadeshi movement in the wake of the partition of Bengal and the rise of revolutionary nationalism.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The rise of national consciousness in the nineteenth century was essentially the result of the British rule. The economic, political and social changes brought about by the British rule resulted in the oppression of all classes of

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Indian people giving rise to a widespread dissatisfaction among the masses. Moreover, the uniform system of administration, development of post and telegraph, railways, printing press and educational institutions created by the British primarily as measures for running an effective administration also became instrumental in providing favourable conditions for the rise and growth of national movement. We will discuss the organizational form and trends of national movement in its early phase.

10.2 RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

During the nineteenth century, apart from popular uprisings and revolts at the mass level, a new consciousness was developing in the educated sections and middle classes. It was this middle class consciousness, which became the chief medium for the channelisation of popular discontent, and, was instrumental in the development of national consciousness in India. The educated classes began to critically examine the Indian society and the awakened sections made all-out efforts for reforms. You have read about these reform movements in the previous Unit. These reform movements, though confined in a large part to the middle class sections, developed a national social consciousness among Indian people, and, deepened their sense of belonging to a common culture. Besides this social consciousness, political consciousness was also developing. As noticed earlier, the educated Indian middle classes, which included merchants, traders, industrialists, professional groups like lawyers, teachers, journalists and doctors, were also suffering under the British rule. This class gradually perceived the imperial designs and started analysing the nature of colonial rule. In the beginning (first half of the 19th century), this class was of the opinion that the means of communication, railways and other industrial enterprises were going to benefit Indians. Under this understanding they therefore supported the British policies but gradually it became clear that the British administrative measures were to help the British rule and their economic policies were benefiting the British merchants and capitalists. Once the Indian middle class realised this, they started protesting against the colonial rule. But unlike the peasants, tribals and workers whose protest was expressed in the form of uprisings and revolts, this class followed a different policy. The middle class worked in two ways.

1) They started writing books, articles and publishing newspapers to critically analyse the British policies and developing consciousness among the masses.

2) The second method adopted by the middle classes was to form organizations, associations and societies for joint programmes and activities.

10.3 EARLY LITERARY AND ORGANIZATIONAL EXPRESSION OF NATIONALISM

Let us first examine the literary activities. We have earlier referred to the introduction of the printing press, and its utility, in the transmission

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and diffusion of ideas. Ram Mohan Roy was a pioneer in this field. He produced a number of books and started a journal called **Sambad Kaumudi** (Bengali) which published several articles on varied themes. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote the play **Neel Darpan** depicting the plight of indigo cultivators. Bankimchandra wrote **Anand Math,** full of nationalist aspirations. In Urdu a large number of works were written in prose and poetry about the degrading conditions of the masses and destruction of many urban centres. In Marathi, Hindi and Tamil also a number of works were published. A number of periodicals and newspapers in different languages started publication. These publications were in English and vernacular languages. The prominent among these were: the **Hindu Patriot, Amrita Bazar Patrika, Bengali, Sanjivani** in Bengal, **Native Opinion, Mahratta** and **Kesari** in Bombay, the **Hindu, Andhra Patrika** and **Kerala Patrika** in Madras, the **Hindustan** and **Azad** in U.P., the **Tribune** and the **Akhbar-i-am** in Punjab. By 1877 there were as many as 169 newspapers in the vernacular. A number of nationalist literary figures also came into prominence such as Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Vishnu Shastri Chiplukar, Subramaniyam Bharti, Bhartendu Harishchandra and Altaf Hussain Hali.

The second method adopted by the middle class was to form associations and organizations. Some of the early organizations were the Landholder's Society (1838), Bengal British India Society (1843), British India Association (1851) in Bengal; the Bombay Association and Deccan Association (1852) in Maharashtra, the Madras Native Association in Madras. The main aim of these organizations was collective action against the British policies harming their interests. Their methods were mostly legal actions in courts or petition against the East India Company and British parliament. They wanted reforms to be included in the Company's charter of 1853. But the charter of 1853 failed to satisfy their aspirations.

After the takeover of India's administration by the British Crown in 1858, new hopes kindled among the Indian middle classes. They thought that the British government would stop the economic exploitation and work for the welfare of the country. Soon they realised that the British Crown too was out to exploit India economically. Now the political activities increased and a number of new organizations appeared. In England was formed London India Association which was later merged with the East India Association (1866). In Maharashtra, Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870) and Indian Association (1876) were formed. In Bengal Indian National Conference (1883) and in Madras Mahajan Sabha were established.

As compared to the earlier organizations formed by middle class elements these organizations were political. Their main aim was to protest against the British policies through petitions and resolutions. They tried to achieve mass awakening through public meetings and statements. They also exchanged views on the national issues. Actually these organizations opened the way for the formation of a strong all India organization, Indian National Congress in 1885. Around the same time the British Government passed some repressive measures like

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Vernacular Press Act, Indian Arms Act, lowering the age for Indian Civil Services etc. Lord Lytton (1876-80) the Viceroy was responsible for them. The reaction to these measures was very strong.

10.4 FOUNDATION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The credit for organizing the first meeting of the Indian National Congress goes to A.O. Hume. He was a retired Government servant who had chosen to stay back in India after retirement. He was on very good terms with Lord Ripon and shared his view that the emergence of the educated class should be accepted as a political reality and that timely steps should be taken to provide legitimate outlets to the grievances of this class and efforts be made to satisfy its ambitions. He laboriously consolidated the network of contacts that he had established. Early in December 1884 he reached Bombay to bid farewell to Ripon. He stayed on there for three months and during this period he discussed with the leaders who were influential in the Presidency, the programme of political action to be adopted by the educated Indians. In March 1885 it was decided that a conference of the Indian National Union (initially it was this name that was adopted) would be convened at Poona during the Christmas week. Initially Hume and his group considered Calcutta as the most likely place for the conference. But later they decided upon Poona, because it was centrally located and the Executive Committee of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha expressed readiness to make arrangements for the conference and provide necessary funds.

However, fate deprived Poona of the opportunity to host the first session of the Indian National Congress. The venue had to be shifted to Bombay because of the outbreak of cholera in Poona. The first meeting was held on Monday, 28 December 1885 in Gokaldas Tejpal Sanskrit College, Bombay. It was attended by 100 men of whom 72 were non-officials and were recognized as members. The honour of being the first ever Congress President belonged to W.C. Bonnerjee of Bengal.

The aims and objects of the Congress were defined very clearly by the President. He described the objectives as:

- Promotion of personal intimacy and friendship amongst the countrymen;
- Eradication of all possible prejudices relating to race, creed or provinces;
- Consolidation of sentiments of nation unity; and
- Recording of the opinions of educated classes on pressing problems of the day, and laying down lines for future course of action in public interest.

10.5 COMPOSITION OF THE CONGRESS AND PARTICIPATION

It is often argued that the lawyers predominated in the Congress. For example, a noted historian Anil Seal points out that over half the delegates

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at the first Congress-39 out of 72-were lawyers and that during the decades to come, more than one-third of the delegates to every Congress session belonged to the legal professions. The old aristocracy, people like rajas, maharajas, big zamindars, and very wealthy merchants, were conspicuous by their absence. Nor did the peasants or artisans feel attracted towards it. The old aristrocratic class did not participate in the Congress proceedings because it felt threatened by new liberal and nationalist ideas. Though the question of poverty of India had been discussed for sometime by various leaders, especially Dadabhai Naoroji, no attempt was made to associate the masses with the movement at this stage. When the Congress came to discuss the condition of the people, it resolved that the first step should be the granting of representative institutions. Given the tactics adopted by the Congress, that of petitioning and drawing attention to grievances by public discussions, this was natural.

10.6 CONTROVERSIES RELATING TO ITS ORIGIN

Since the Indian National Congress has played an important role in India's history, it was natural that contemporary opinion as well as subsequent historians should have speculated about the reasons which led to its establishment. In fact this question has been discussed ever since the Congress was founded. Many scholars have made diligent attempts to identify the efforts of an individual or individuals or the particular circumstances which can be considered as the principal immediate factors behind the event. But the evidence is conflicting. The issue continues to be discussed among historians, a hundred years after the event. We shall discuss the alternative explanations below.

10.6.1 Official Conspiracy Theory

If a body like the Indian National Congress had been founded by an Indian, it would have been accepted as something normal and logical. Why did an Englishmen, A.O. Hume, take the initiative? Moreover, Hume was not just any Englishman: he belonged to the Indian Civil Service. It is said that while in service he had come across a mass of material which suggested that as a result of the sufferings of the masses and alienation of intellectuals, much discontent had accumulated and this could pose a threat to the continuance of British rule. Moreover, Hume himself had said that his aim was to provide, to use his own expression, a 'safety valve' providing control to the "great and growing forces generated by" the British themselves. This has been juxtaposed with W.C. Bonnerjee's statement that Hume was acting under the direct advice of Dufferin. These two facts studied together gave rise to the argument that the Indian National Congress grew out of the British conspiracy, the aim of which was to provide a peaceful and constitutional outlet to the discontent amongst the educated Indians and thus provide against the threat to the Raj.

Some historians believe that Hume's role and his influence in the official circle have been exaggerated in the story. Private papers to Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General, are now available and they show that Hume's views were not taken very seriously by British officials. Secondly, Hume's motives were nobler than just creation of a 'safety valve' with a view to

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provide safe outlets to educated Indians' discontent. He possessed a genuine human sympathy for India, and worked tirelessly for many years to make the Congress a viable and continuing organization. From 1885 to 1906 he was the general secretary of the Congress and helped in guiding, shaping, coordinating and recording its activities. For Hume there was nothing inconsistent in working for the regeneration of the Indian people and at the same time accepting an 'enlightened' distant imperialism from which Indian people could substantially benefit for their social and cultural regeneration. Hume was by no means responsible for bringing about changes in the social and political milieu, which, in a broader sense, made the foundation and survival of a national organization possible. The formation of the Congress cannot be described only to the initiative of an individual. There were other factors, as has already been pointed out.

In this context a question can arise. Why did the educated Indians accept Hume's leadership? One reason could be that being an Englishman he was free from regional prejudices. But it seems that the more important reason was that Indian leaders wanted to proceed cautiously lest their efforts invite official wrath. Coming from a British ex-civil servant, such an effort was less likely to arouse hostility in official circles. They had a fairly correct and realistic estimate of what was possible. Under the circumstances, they wanted to consolidate and ventilate their views without arousing suspicion in the minds of their rulers.

10.6.2 Ambitions and Rivalries of Indian Elite

Some historians, mainly centred at Cambridge, have argued that the Indian National Congress was, in some ways, not really national, that it was a movement of self-interested individuals and that it functioned as a vehicle for the pursuit of their material interests and parochial rivalries. (Anil Seal has been the most influential historian to express this view). But this view has been challenged in India. It is true that lust for power or desire to serve one's interests cannot be totally ignored. But at the same time the general factors cannot be brushed aside. Such an explanation ignores the feeling of hurt caused by racial discrimination, feeling of pride in the achievements of fellow-countrymen and also the slowly growing perception that interests of their countrymen would be better served if relations between Britain and India were restructured. Identity in aspirations and frustrations under an alien rule had strengthened these bonds. The founders of the Indian National Congress and various other organizations were inspired by idealism and loftiness of a nationalist vision because of which the interests of self, family, caste and community were subordinated to the interests of the Indian nation.

10.6.3 Need for an All-India Body

Viewed in a larger context, the founding of the Indian National Congress was a response to the then existing political and socio-economic conditions which had resulted from long subjection to the alien rule. During the 1880s, as we have seen, the idea of a national organization was very much in the air. In fact, during the last ten days of 1885 as many as five conferences were held in different parts of the country. The Madras Mahajan Sabha held its second annual conference from 22 to 24 December. It was so timed as to enable the members of the Sabha to attend the Congress at Poona. The Second Indian

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National Conference, convened by the Indian Association, met at Calcutta. Early in December 1885 when the plan to hold a conference at Poona was announced, attempt seems to have been made to persuade Surendranath Banerjea to cancel his conference. But he expressed his inability to do so at that stage. It merged with the Indian National Congress in 1886. Two other conferences held during the same period were the conferences organized by Eurasians at Jabalpur and by Prayag Central Hindu Samaj at Allahabad. Given the emergence of a countrywide educated class, the idea they expressed, and the organizational developments that had taken place, it was only a matter of time before a national body was created. The Indian National Congress represented the culmination of awareness amongst educated groups of the need to work together for political purposes. The early years (1885-1905) saw the evolution of Indian National Congress. During this period the Congress was dominated by moderate leaders. Gradually a section emerged which did not agree with the moderate policies and believed in aggressive action. Due to their aggressive posture this group was called the extremists. Both the groups believed in different political methods to oppose the British rule. Their differences led to the split in Congress in 1907.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How did newspapers and journals help in the growth of national consciousness?

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2) Which of the theories regarding the origin of the Congress do you find acceptable?

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10.7 THE METHODS OF WORK OF EARLY CONGRESS

Early Congressmen had an implicit faith in the efficacy of peaceful and constitutional agitation. The press and the platform at the annual sessions were their agencies. However, the press was the only agency through which the Congress propaganda was carried out throughout the year. Many leaders, in fact, were editors of either English or Indian language newspapers and wielded their pen powerfully. The holding of the annual session was another method of Congress propaganda. At these meetings the Government policy was discussed, and resolutions were passed in a forceful manner. The annual sessions attracted the attentions of both the educated sections of the middle class, and the Government. But the gravest drawback was that the Congress sessions lasted only for three days a year. It had no machinery to carry on the work in the interval between the two sessions. The Congressmen's belief in the essential sense of justice and goodness of the British nation was strong. They worked under the illusion that all would be well if the British could be acquainted with the true state of affairs in India. They thought that it was only the bureaucracy which stood between the people and their rights. So their aim was to educate Indian public opinion and making it conscious of

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its rights. It also intended to inform British public about the problems faced by the Indians and to remind it of its duty towards India. To fulfill the latter aim, deputations of leading Indians were sent to Britain to present the Indian viewpoint. In 1889, a British Committee of Indian National Congress was founded. To carry on its propaganda the Committee started its organ, *India*, in 1890. It was to present the Indian viewpoint to the British authorities that Dadabhai Naoroji spent a major part of his life in England. He got elected to the British House of Commons and formed a strong Indian lobby in that House.

10.8 THE MODERATES: THE DEMANDS AND PROGRAMME

The Congress programme during the early phase (1885-1905) was very modest. It demanded moderate constitutional reforms, economic relief, administrative re-organization and defence of civil rights. The more important of the demands were:

- the organization of the provincial councils,
- simultaneous examination for the I.C.S. in India and England,
- the abolition or re-constitution of the Indian Council,
- the separation of the Judiciary from the executive,
- the repeal of the Arms Act,
- the appointment of Indians to the commissioned ranks in the Army,
- the reduction of military expenditure, and
- the introduction of Permanent Settlement to other parts of India.

The Congress expressed opinions on all the important measures of the Government and protested against the unpopular ones. These demands were repeated year after year, although there was hardly any response from the Government. During the first twenty years (1885-1905) there was practically no change in the Congress programme. This phase of the Congress is known as the Moderate phase. During this period the leaders were cautious in their demands. They did not want to annoy the government and incur the risk of suppression of their activities. From 1885 to 1892, their main demand continued to be expansion and reform of the Legislative Councils, the membership of the Councils for elected representatives of the people and also an increase in the powers of these Councils.

The British Government was forced to pass the Indian Councils Act of 1892, but the provisions of this Act failed to satisfy the Congress leaders. They demanded Indian control over the public purse and raised the slogan that had earlier been raised by the Americans during their War of Independence, 'No taxation without representation'. By 1905 the Congress put forth the demand for Swaraj or self-rule for Indians within the British Empire on the model of the self-governing colonies like Australia or Canada. This demand was first referred to by G.K. Gokhale in 1905 (at Banaras) and later explicitly stated by Dadabhai Naoroji in 1906 (at Calcutta). They also fully recognized the value of the freedom of the press and speech and condemned all attempts at their curtailment. In fact, the struggle for the removal of restrictions on

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press became the integral part of the nationalist struggle for freedom. The progressive content of these demands and their direct connection with the needs and aspirations of the Indian middle class is clear by these demands. Most of them opposed on grounds both economic and political, the large-scale import of foreign capital in railways, plantations and industries and the facilities accorded to these by the Government. By attacking expenditure on the army and the civil service, they indirectly challenged the basis of British rule in India. By attacking the land revenue and taxation policies, they sought to undermine the financial basis of British administration in India. The use of Indian army and revenue for British imperial purposes in Asia and Africa was identified as another form of economic exploitation.

10.9 IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF EXTREMISM

Around 1904-5, the group which began to dominate in the Congress has been called 'Extremists' by historians. The nationalist ideas behind the Revolt of 1857, according to the Extremists, were Swadharma and Swaraj. Attachment to rationalism and western ideals had almost alienated the 'Liberal' (Moderate) school from the masses in India. That is why despite their high 'idealism, they failed to make any effective impact on the people. In due course a section was bound to come to fill this gap. In the place of adoration and imitation of all things Western, there was a movement by the eighties of the nineteenth century urging people to look to their ancient civilization. The political radicals who derived inspiration from their traditional cultural values were ardent nationalists who wanted to have relations with other countries in terms of equality and self respect. They had tremendous sense of self respect and wanted to keep their heads high. They opposed the moderates who were considered by them to be servile and respectful to the British. To the Extremists, emancipation meant something much deeper and wider than politics. To them it was a matter of invigorating and energising all departments of life.

There were three sections of the Extremists – the Maharashtra group, headed by B.G. Tilak; the Bengal group represented by B.C. Pal and Aurobindo, and the Punjab group led by Lala Lajpat Rai. In Bengal, they were greatly influenced by the ideas of Bankim Chandra, who was a liberal conservative like Edmund Burke. He wanted no break with the past which, he thought, might create more problems than it would solve. He was opposed to precipitate reforms imposed from above. In his view, reforms should wait on moral and religious re-generation which should be based on fundamentals of religion. Bankim blazed the trail for the Extremists in his contemptuous criticism of the Moderates. This nationalism of the Extremists was emotionally charged. The social, economic and political ideals were all blended in this inspiring central conception of nationalism. Aurobindo even raised patriotism to the pedestal of mother worship. He said in a letter, "I know my country as my mother. I adore her. I worship her."

10.10 EXTREMISTS IN ACTION

Tilak resented any interference by an alien government into the domestic and private life of the people. He quarreled with the reformers over the

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Age of Consent Bill in 1891. He introduced the Ganapati festival in 1893. Aurobindo published 'New Lamps for Old' in the *Indu Prakash* between 1893 and 1894. Tilak threw a challenge to the National Social Conference in 1895 by not allowing it to hold its session in the Congress pavilion in Poona. The National Social Conference was under the influence of Moderate Wing. In the same year the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was captured by the Extremists from the Moderates. The Shivaji festival was first held on 15 April, 1896, with the foundation of the Deccan Sabha on November 4, 1896, the division between the Extremists and the Moderates in Maharashtra was complete, but it was not so all-over India. Bipin Chandra Pal, for example, the leader of the Bengal Extremists was still in the camp of the Moderates. He wrote in 1897: "I am loyal to the British Government, because with me loyalty to the British Government is identical with loyalty to my own people and my own country; because I believe that God has placed this Government over us, for our salvation". Only in 1902, he could write, "The Congress here and its British Committee in London, are both begging institutions". Because of the soft and vacillating policy it pursued, Lajpat Rai also was not interested in Congress programme. Between 1893 and 1900 he did not attend any meeting of the Congress. He felt during this period that the Congress leaders cared more for fame and pomp than for the interests of the country. The victory of Japan over Russia (1904-05) sent a thrill of enthusiasm throughout Asia. Earlier in 1896 the Ethiopians had defeated the Italian army. These victories pricked the bubble of European superiority and gave to the Indians self-confidence.

10.11 THE PARTITION, BOYCOTT, SWADESHI AND NATIONAL EDUCATION

The Curzon's scheme to partition Bengal took a concrete shape gradually from the time the Viceroy wrote his minute on Territorial Redistribution on 1st June, 1903 to the day the final scheme of division was dispatched to the home authorities in London for sanction on 2nd February, 1905. On 19 July, 1905 the Government of India announced its decision to form the new province of "Eastern Bengal and Assam", comprising the Chittagong, Dacca and Rajshahi divisions, Hill Tippera (Tripura), Maida and Assam. The province came into existence on 16 October, 1905, by breaking up Bengal and its 41.5 million Bengali speaking people.

The anti-partition agitation began in Bengal on the conventional moderate nationalist lines, though with a great deal of noise and angry protestations. There were sharp press campaigns against the partition scheme, numerous public meetings in opposition to it and the drafting of petitions to the Government for its annulment. Big conferences were held at the Town Hall, Calcutta, where delegates from districts came to participate and gave vent to their injured sentiments. All this was impressive, making the educated middle class' case against the partition loud and clear. But it made no effect on the indifference of the authorities in India and Britain. This led to discovery of the boycott of British goods as an effective weapon. The boycott suggestion first came from Krishnakumar Mitra's *Sanjivani* on 3rd July, 1905, and was later accepted by the prominent public men at the Town

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Hall meeting of 7 August, 1905. The discovery was followed by the calls of Rabindranath Tagore and Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, respectively, for the observance of raksha-bandhan (the tying of thread wristlets on each other's hands as a symbol of brotherhood) and arandhan (the keeping of the hearth unlit at all the homes as a sign of mourning) on the day the partition was put into effect. With these measures the movement gained a new fervour.

The boycott of British products was followed by

- the advocacy of swadeshi or exhorting purchasers to buy indigenously produced goods as a patriotic duty,
- Charkha (the spinning wheel) came to typify the popular concern for the country's economic self-sufficiency, and
- the holding of swadeshi melas or fairs for selling handicrafts and other articles became a regular feature.

A considerable enthusiasm was created for undertaking swadeshi or Indian enterprises. A number of exclusively Indian industrial ventures, such as the Calcutta Potteries, Bengal Chemicals, Bange Lakshmi Cotton Mills, Mohini Mills and National Tannery were started. Various soap, match box and tobacco manufacturing establishments and oil mills, as well as financial activities, like the swadeshi banks, insurance and steam navigation companies also took off the ground under the impetus generated by the movement.

Meanwhile, the picketing before the shops selling British goods soon led to a boycott of the officially controlled educational institutions. The British threat to the student-picketers in the form of the withdrawal of grants, scholarships and affiliations of the institutions to which they belonged and the actual imposition of fines and rustication orders on them resulted in the decision by large number of students to leave these schools and colleges. Boycott of schools and colleges forced the leaders of the Swadeshi movement to think in terms of running a parallel system of education in Bengal. Soon appeals were made, donations collected and distinguished persons came forward to formulate programmes for national education. These efforts resulted in the establishment of the Bengal Technical Institute (which was started on 25 July, 1906, and which later turned into the College of Engineering and Technology), Jadavpur (the nucleus of the present day Jadavpur University), the Bengal National College and School (which was set up on 15 August, 1906 with Aurobindo Ghose as its Principal) and a number of national, primary and secondary schools in the districts.

10.12 THE RISE OF REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM

A large-scale participation of the masses in the struggle for Swaraj – the essential pre-condition of a successful passive resistance – was not, however, realized. With little success among the workers, total failure in respect of the cultivators and sad mismanagement of the communal tangle, the Swadeshi movement was unable, by the second half of 1907, to rise to its full potential or assume the character of a mass upheaval. Besides, as an anti-imperialist agitation of great intensity, it had to bear continuously the repressive measures of its powerful opponent. The authorities prohibited

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the shouting of the slogan "Bande Mataram" in public places, disqualified from the Government employment all those who took part in the agitation in any form and expelled and fined student participants of the movement. Bands of Gurkha soldiers were sent to Barisal and other places to teach the agitators a lesson, and the police and the officials were given a free hand. The climax was reached in April 1906 when the delegates attending the provincial conference at Barisal were lathi-charged by the police. Severe repressive measures followed it. The question of meeting force with force naturally came to the forefront.

A violent method appealed to the romantic attitude of the middle class youth of Bengal, who sought solace in heroic individual acts when mass actions did not materialize and who pinned their hopes on secret societies when open politics could not overwhelm the Government. The cult of revolutionary violence was also attractive to those who were in a desperate hurry and whose patience had practically run out. "If we sit idle and hesitate to rise till the whole population is goaded to desperation", *Yugantar* argued in August I907, "then we shall continue idle till the end of time...." The alternative was for the advanced elite section to take up arms against the oppressors. Soon some of such small groups (samitis) grew exclusive inner circles, hatched plans for selective assassinations and committed political robberies for raising funds to buy arms and ammunition. These militant proceedings were spearheaded by the Yugantar group in Calcutta and the Anushilan Samiti in Dacca.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the differences of methods of work of the Moderates and Extremists.

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2) Discuss the role of the Partition of Bengal and Swadeshi Movement in fostering national feeling.

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10.13 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you have studied how National Consciousness gradually developed in India during the British rule. This consciousness mainly developed as a result of British policies in India and was confined to the middle class. The establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 thus marked the advent of a new era. It was a visible symbol of the growing sense of unity amongst the Indian people. It is true that in the beginning the Congress was not a well-knit political organization, it had no regular membership or a central office, its views were very mild and moderate. But as someone has rightly said, great institutions have often had small beginnings. Swadeshi movement marked a total reversal of the earlier nationalist approach of "petitioning and praying" to the Raj for concessions,

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as well as a virtual rejection of the moderate political programme. It set before the Indian people the goal of swaraj or independence, and committed them to the task of doing away with Britain's imperialist stranglehold over India. The growth of revolutionary nationalism had certainly disturbed the British in India, but it could not challenge their authority as the open politics of swadeshi did, nor could it seriously threaten their rule as an ever-expanding mass mobilisation might have done.

10.14 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 10.3

2) See Section 10.6

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sections 10.8 and 10.10

2) See Section 10.11

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UNIT 11 NATIONALIST MOVEMENT UNDER MAHATMA GANDHI

Structure

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to explain:

- Gandhi's emergence as a mass leader,
- Gandhi's ideas, methods and techniques of mass mobilization,

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- Gandhi's role in movements like Champaran, Rowlatt Act, Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement, and
- The role played by masses and various social groups in Gandhi's led movements.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi played a key role in transforming the content, ideology and range of Indian politics during the National Movement. With his entry into politics there opened a new phase of struggle. With the shift to mass mobilization, he remained the dominant personality during the National Movement and played a crucial role in directing the struggle against British imperialism. In the initial stage of his entry into Indian politics, Gandhi tried to understand Indian economic, social and political reality and applied new forms of struggle. During his stay in South Africa Gandhi fought against racial discrimination which denied to the Indian community human rights necessary for leading a civilized life. So he was experienced in the techniques of political mobilization. After his return from South Africa, Gandhi emerged the most prominent leader of Indian national movement and using his new techniques of mass mobilization he was able to secure participation of poorer peasants, youth and women. This was visible in the series of movements like Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement. So, understanding Gandhi's ideas and techniques is essential to understand his influence on the National Movement.

11.2 KNOWING THE COUNTRY

Gandhi reached India on January 9, 1915 and was given a warm welcome for his partial victory in South Africa. In India, the moderate leader Gokhale was his political Guru. He wanted Gandhi to join the Servants of India Society. But Gandhi could not become its member because some members of the society strongly opposed his entry. Gokhale had extracted a promise from Gandhi that he would not express any opinion or political matters for a year. Gandhi spent 1915, and most of 1916 touring India and visiting places as far as Sindh and Rangoon, Banaras and Madras. He also visited Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan, and then the kumbh fair at Hardwar. All this helped Gandhi in the better understanding of his countrymen and the conditions in India. In 1915 Gandhi had set up an Ashram at Ahmedabad on the bank of the Sabarmati. Here Gandhi lived with his close associates who were being trained in the rigorous of moral life essential for a satyagrahi.

At this time Gandhi took very little interest in political matters, and at his meetings he mostly spoke on his experiences in South Africa and the ideas he had formulated there. When Annie Besant approached Gandhi to join her in founding a Home Rule League he refused on the ground that he did not wish to embarrass the British government during the war. In 1915, he attended the Congress session, but avoided speaking on important issues like self government. Gandhi welcomed the unity move of bringing back Tilak and others who were earlier excluded from the Congress. But at the same time Gandhi made it clear that he did not belong to any group. He attended the reunited session of the Congress but refused to speak on issues

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which would have meant aligning himself with a particular group. He spoke strongly on the indentured labourers recruitment and a resolution was passed for the abolition of this practice.

11.3 THE GANDHIAN IDEOLOGICAL TOOLS AND METHODS OF MASS MOBILIZATION

In this part we will study the main aspects of Gandhian ideology. Before we discuss Gandhi's ideology it is necessary to mention that there were various influences which worked on Gandhi and helped him in evolving his philosophy. His autobiography makes it clear that the outlook of his parents and the socio-religious millieu of his native place left a profound influence on him. In particular, the values of Vaishnavism and the tradition of Jainism shaped his early thoughts. Moreover, some Hindu texts like the *Bhagavata Gita* also influenced him. The Gospels (especially the Sermon on the Mount) and the writings of Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin also greatly influenced his thinking. However, Gandhi was primarily a man of action and his own experiences in life helped him more than his readings in evolving and shaping his ideology.

11.3.1 Satyagraha

The chief aspect of Gandhi's ideology was Satyagraha i.e. 'truth-force'. As mentioned earlier, it was evolved by Gandhi in South Africa but after it had been fully developed it became a dominant element in India's struggle for freedom from 1919 onwards. For Gandhi, the Satyagraha was to be used so that by self suffering and not by violence the enemy could be converted to one's own view. Gandhi made a distinction between the Satyagraha and passive resistance, when he wrote:

"The latter (passive resistance) has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end; whereas the former (Satyagraha) has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest, and excludes the use of violence in any shape."

In fact, for Gandhi, Satyagraha was not merely a political tactic but part of a total philosophy of life and ideology of action. Gandhi believed that the search for truth was the goal of human life. Since no one could know the ultimate Truth one should never attack another's integrity or prevent another's search for truth.

11.3.2 Non-Violence

Non-Violence formed the basis of Satyagraha. Gandhi emphasized that non-violent Satyagraha could be practised by common people for achieving political ends. But some time Gandhi took a position which fell short of complete non-violence. His repeated insistence that even violence is preferable to a cowardly surrender to injustice sometimes created a delicate problem of interpretation. In practice, Satyagraha could assume various forms – fasting, non-violent picketing, different types of non-cooperation and ultimately in politics, civil disobedience in willing anticipation of the legal penalty. Gandhi firmly believed that all these forms of Satyagraha were pure means to achieve pure ends.

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11.3.3 Use of Religious Idioms

Another important aspect of Gandhi's ideology was his attitude towards religion. Religion for Gandhi was not a doctrinal formulation of any religious system but a basic truth underlying all formal religions. Gandhi described religion as the struggle for Truth. His conviction was that religion could not be relegated to the realm of private opinion but must influence and permeate all activities of men. He was convinced that religion provided the fundamental basis for political action in India. Gandhi also used the religious idiom through concepts like 'Ram Rajya' to mobilize people in the National Movement.

11.3.4 Idea of Hind Swaraj

The other important feature of Gandhian thought was the body of ideas which he illustrated in his book *Hind Swaraj* (1909). In this work, Gandhi pointed out that the real enemy was not the British political domination but the modern western civilization which was luring India into its stranglehold. He believed that the Indians educated in western style, particularly lawyers, doctors, teachers and industrialists, were undermining Indian's ancient heritage by insidiously spreading modern ways. He critized railways as they had spread plague and produced famines by encouraging the export of food grains. Here he saw Swaraj or self rule as a state of life which could only exist where Indians followed their traditional civilization uncorrupted by modem civilization. Gandhi wrote:

"Indian's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past 50 years or so. The Railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and such like have to go and the so-called upper classes have to learn to live consciously and religiously and deliberately the simple life of peasant."

Later on, Gandhi tried to give concrete shape to his social and economic ideas by taking up the programme of Khadi, village reconstruction and Harijan welfare (which included the removal of untouchability). It is true that these efforts of Gandhi could not completely solve the problem of the rural people, but it cannot be denied that this programme of Gandhi succeeded in improving their conditions to a certain extent and making the whole country conscious of the new need for its social and economic re-construction.

11.3.5 Swadeshi

Gandhi advocated swadeshi which meant the use of things belonging to one's own country, particularly stressing the replacement of foreign machine made goods with Indian handmade cloth. This was his solution to the poverty of peasants who could spin at home to supplement their income and his cure for the drain of money to England in payment for imported cloth.

11.4 GANDHI'S PLUNGE INTO INDIAN POLITICS

Gandhi's entry into Indian politics occurred in the 1917-1918, when he became involved in three local issues concerning with Champaran indigo farmers, the Ahmedabad textile workers and the Kheda peasants. In these

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disputes Gandhi deployed his technique of Satyagraha and his victories in all these cases ultimately paved the way for his emergence as an all India leader. Here we will focus only on Champaran case to understand Gandhi's methods and techniques of mass mobilization.

11.4.1 Champaran's Experiment in Mass Mobilization

Champaran in the Tirhut division of North Bihar had been seething with agrarian discontent for some time. European planters had established indigo farms and factories in Champaran at the beginning of the 19th century. By 1916-17, a large part of Champaran was held by three proprietors, the Bettiah, Ram Nagar and Madhuban estates. Bettiah was the largest estate consisting of over one and half thousand villages. Most of these villages were not managed by landlords but were leased to thikadars or temporary tenure holders, of whom the most influential group was European indigo planters. The basic issue of the trouble was the system of indirect cultivation whereby peasants leased land from planters, binding themselves to grow indigo each year on specified land in return for an advance at the beginning of the cultivation season.

Indigo was cultivated under the system called Tinkathia by which a tenant had to cultivate indigo at three-twentieths of his holdings, which generally constituted the best portion of the land. Although some small modifications were made in the Tinkathia system in 1908, it did not bring any material change in the degrading conditions of the tenants. Planters always forced them to sell their crop for a fixed and usually uneconomic price. At this time the demand of Indian indigo in the world market was declining due to the increasing production of synthetic indigo in Germany. Most planters at Champaran realised that indigo cultivation was no longer a paying proposition. The planters tried to save their own position by forcing the tenants to bear the burden of their losses. They offered to release the tenants from growing indigo (which was a basic condition in their agreement with planters) if the latter paid compensation or damages. Apart from this, the planters heavily inflated the rents and imposed many illegal levies on the tenants.

Gandhi took no interest in the case of indigo cultivators of Champaran when this question was discussed at the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916 on the ground that he knew nothing about the matter. But Raj Kumar Shukla a peasant from Champaran, persuaded Gandhi to visit Champaran. Gandhi arrived in Bihar and started making investigations in person. When he reached Motihari, the headquarters of the district of Champaran, he was served with an order to quit Champaran as he was regarded a danger to the public peace. Gandhi decided to disobey the order. He was immediately arrested and tried in the district court. But the Bihar government ordered the Commissioner and District Magistrate to abandon proceedings and grant to Gandhi the facilities for investigation. Gandhi was warned not to stir up trouble, but he was free to continue his investigations into the cultivators' grievances.

The Government appointed Champaran Agrarian Committee with Gandhi as one of its members. The committee unanimously recommended the abolition of Tinkathia system and many illegal exactions under which the tenants

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groaned. The enhanced rents were reduced, and as for the illegal recoveries, the committee recommended 25% refund. The major recommendations of the Committee were included in the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1917.

In this agitation, the chief supporters of Gandhi came from the educated middle class. For instance, Rajendra Prasad, Gorakh Prasad, Kirpalani and some other educated persons from the cities worked as his close associates. Local Mahajans traders and village Mukhtars (attorneys) also helped him. But it was the peasantry which gave him the real massive support. Gandhi approached them in a most simple and unassuming manner. In the countryside, he often walked on foot or travelled in a bullock cart. He came where ordinary people lived and talked about their fight in the language they understood.

11.4.2 Kheda

Gandhi's second intervention was for the peasants of Kheda in Gujarat where his method of Satyagraha came under a severe test. Most of Kheda was a fertile tract and the crop of food grains, tobacco and cotton produced here had a convenient and sizeable market in Ahmedabad. There were many rich peasant proprietors called Patidars or from the Kunbi caste. Besides, a large number of small peasants and landless labourers also lived in this region.

In 1917 excessive rain considerably damaged the Kharif crop in Kheda. This coincided with an increase in the price of kerosene, iron, cloth and salt because of which the cost of living for the peasantry went up. In view of the poor harvest, the peasants demanded the remission of land revenue. The 'revenue code' provided for a total remission if the crops were less than twenty five per cent of the normal production. Two Bombay barristers, V.J. Patel and G.K. Parakh made the enquiries and reached the conclusion that a major portion of the crop was damaged. But the government did not agree with their findings. After enquiry into the state of the crop in Kheda the Collector decided that there was no justification for the remission of land revenue. The official contention was that the agitation was not a spontaneous expression of the peasant discontent but was started by 'outsiders' or members of the Home Rule League and Gujarat Sabha of which Gandhi was the president at that time. The truth was that initiative for the agitation against payment of revenue came neither from Gandhi nor from the other Ahmedabad politicians; it was raised by local village leaders like Mohanlal Pandya of Kapadvanj taluka in Kheda.

Gandhi maintained that the officials had over-valued the crops and the cultivators were entitled to a suspension of revenue as a legal right and not as a concession by grace. After a lot of hesitation he decided to launch a Satyagraha movement on 22 March 1918. He inaugurated the Satyagraha at a meeting in Nadiad, and urged the peasants not to pay their land revenue. He toured villages and gave moral support to the peasants in refusing to pay revenue, and to expel their fear of the government authority.

Gandhi was also assisted in this struggle by lndulal Yajnik. Vallabhbhai Patel and Anasuya Sarabhai. The Satyagraha reached at its peak by 21 April when 2,337 peasants pledged not to pay revenue. Most of the Patidars took part in this Satyagraha. Some poorer peasants were coerced by the government

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into paying the revenue. Moreover, a good Rabi crop had weakened the case for remission. Gandhi began to realise that peasantry was on the verge of exhaustion. He decided to call off the agitation when the government issued instructions that land revenue should be recovered from only those who had the capacity to pay and no pressure should be exerted on the genuinely poor peasants. This agitation did not have a uniform effect on the area. Only 70 villages out of 559 in Kheda were actually involved in it and it was called off after a token concession. But this agitation certainly helped Gandhi in broadening his social base in the rural Gujarat.

11.4.3 Ahmedabad

Gandhi organized the third campaign in Ahmedabad where he intervened in a dispute between the mill owners and workers. Ahmedabad was becoming the leading industrial town in Gujarat. But the millowners often faced scarcity. of labour and they had to pay high wages to attract enough millhands. In 1917 plague outbreak made labour shortage more acute because it drove many workers away from Ahmedabad to the countryside. To dissuade the workers from leaving the town, the millowners decided to pay 'Plague Bonus' which was sometimes as high as 75% of the normal wages of the workers. After the epidemic was over, the millowners decided to discontinue the Plague Bonus. But the workers opposed the employers move and argued that it was helping them to offset the war time rise in the cost of living. The millowners were prepared to give 20% increase but the workers were demanding a 50% raise in the wages in view of the price hike.

Gandhi was kept informed about the working conditions in Ahmedabad mills by one of the secretaries of the Gujarat Sabha. Gandhi knew Ambalal Sarabhai, a millowner, as the latter had financially helped Gandhi's Ashram. Moreover, Ambalal's sister Anasuya Sarabhai had reverence for Gandhi. Gandhi discussed the workers problems with Ambalal Sarabhai and decided to intervene in the dispute. Both workers and millowners agreed to refer the issue to a board of arbitration consisting of three representatives of the employers and three of the workers with the British Collector as Chairman. Gandhi was included in the board as representing the workers. But, suddenly the millowners decided to withdraw from the board on the ground that Gandhi had no real authority or mandate from the workers, and that there was no guarantee that workers would accept the arbitration award. They declared the lockout of the Mills from 22 February 1918.

In such a situation, Gandhi decided to study the whole situation in detail. He went through a mass of data concerning the financial state of the mills and compared their wage rates with those of Bombay-Finally he came to the conclusion that the workers should demand 35% instead of 50% increase in their wages. Gandhi began the Satyagraha movement against the millowners. The workers were asked to take a pledge stating that they would not resume work without 35% increase arid that they would remain law abiding during the lockout. Gandhi, assisted by Anasuya Sarabhai organized daily mass meetings of workers, in which he delivered lectures and issued a series of leaflets on the situation.

The millowners ended the lockout on 12 March and announced that they would take back the workers who were willing to accept 20% increase. On

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the other hand, Gandhi announced on 15 March that he would undertake a fast until a settlement was reached. Gandhi's object was to rally the workers who were thinking of joining the mills despite their pledge. The fast created tremendous excitement in Ahmedabad and the millowners were compelled to negotiate. A settlement was reached on 18 March. According to this agreement, the workers on their first day would receive 35% raise, in keeping with their pledge. On the second day, they would get 20% increase, offered by the millowners. From the third day until the date of an award by an arbitrator, they would split the difference and receive 27½ % increase. Finally the arbitrator's award went in favour of the workers and 35% raise was given to them.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Discuss the role of Gandhi in Champaran peasant distress.

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2) Analyse briefly ideological tools and methods used by Gandhi in his agitations.

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11.4.4 Rowlatt Act Satyagraha

The British government drafted two bills to deal effectively with the revolutionary activities and presented them to the Imperial Legislative Council on 6 February 1919. The government maintained that the bills were 'temporary measures' which aimed at preventing 'seditious crimes'.

The new bills attempted to make war-time restrictions permanent. They provided trial of offences by a special court consisting of three high court judges. There was no provision of appeal against the decision of this court which could meet in camera and take into consideration evidence not admissible under the Indian Evidence Act. The bill also proposed to give authority to the government to search a place and arrest a person without a warrant. Detention without a trial for maximum period of two years was also provided in the bills. The bills were regarded by nationalist leaders as an effort to conciliate a section of official and non-official white opinion which had resented Montagu's Reform proposals.

There was widespread condemnation of the bills in the whole country. Gandhi also launched his campaign against the bills. He formed a Satyagraha Sabha on 24th February 1919 in Bombay to protest against the Rowlatt Bills. Its members signed a pledge proclaiming their determination to disobey these laws. A country-wide agitation was planned for April 6, 1919. The success of hartal varied considerably between regions and between towns and the countryside. In Delhi a hartal was observed on

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30th March and ten people were killed in police firing. In almost all major towns of the country, the hartal was observed on the 6th April and the people responded enthusiastically. Gandhi left Bombay on the 8th April to promote the Satyagraha agitation in Delhi and Punjab. But, as his entry in Punjab was considered dangerous by the government, Gandhi was removed from the train in which he was travelling at Palwal near Delhi and was taken back to Bombay. The news of Gandhi's arrest precipitated the crisis. The situation became tense in Bombay and violence broke out in Ahmedabad and Virangam. In Ahmedabad the government enforced martial law. The Punjab region as a whole and Amritsar, in particular, witnessed the worst scenes of violence. In Amritsar, the news of Gandhi's arrest coincided with the arrest of two local leaders Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal on 10th April. This led to mob violence and government buildings were set on fire, five Englishmen were murdered, and a woman assaulted. The civil authority lost its control of the city. On 13th April, General Dyer ordered his troops to fire on a peaceful unarmed crowd assembled at Jallianwala Bagh. Most of the people were not aware of the ban on meetings, and they were shot without the slightest warning by General Dyer who later on said that it was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of 'producing a moral effect'. According to official figures, 379 persons were killed but the unofficial accounts gave much higher figures.

The whole agitation against the Rowlatt Act shows that it was not properly organized. The Satyagraha Sabha concentrated mainly on publishing propaganda literature and collecting signatures on the Satyagraha pledge. The Congress as an organization was hardly in the picture at all. In most of the areas people participated because of their own social and economic grievances against the British rule. Gandhi's Rowlatt Act Satyagraha provided a rallying point to the people belonging to different sections and communities. The most significant result of this agitation was the emergence of Gandhi as an all India leader.

11.5 NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

During 1920-21 the Indian National Movement entered into a new phase, i.e. a phase of mass politics and mass mobilization. The British rule was opposed through two mass movements, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation. Though emerging out of separate issues both these movements adopted a common programme of action. The technique of non-violent struggle was adopted at a national level. The background to the movements was provided by the impact of the First World War, the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

11.5.1 The Issue of Khilafat

During the First World War Turkey allied with Germany and Austria against the British. The Indian Muslims regarded the Sultan of Turkey as their spiritual leader, Khalifa. So, their sympathies were naturally with Turkey. After the war, the British removed the Khalifa from power in Turkey. Hence, the Muslims started the Khilafat movement in India for the restoration of the Khalifa's position. Their main demands were:

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- Khalifa's control should be retained over the Muslim sacred places, and
- In territorial adjustments after the war the Khalifa should be left with sufficient territories.

In early 1919, a Khilafat Committee was formed in Bombay. The initiative was taken by Muslim merchants and their actions were confined to meetings, petitions and deputation in favour of the Khalifa. However, there soon emerged a militant trend within the movement. The leaders of this trend were not satisfied with a moderate approach. Instead they preached for the launching of a countrywide movement. They advocated, for the first time, at the All India Khilafat Conference in Delhi (22-23 November 1919) non-cooperation with the British Government in India. It was in this conference that Hasrat Mohani made a call for the boycott of British goods. The Central Khilafat Committee met at Allahabad from 1st to 3rd June 1920. The meeting was attended by a number of Congress and Khilafat leaders. In this meeting a programme of non-cooperation towards the Government was declared. This was to include:

- boycott of titles conferred by the Government,
- boycott of civil services, army and police, i.e. all government jobs, and
- non-payment of taxes to the Government.

August 1st, 1920 was fixed as the date to start the movement. Gandhi insisted that unless the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs were undone, there was to be non-cooperation with the Government. However, for the success of this movement, Congress support was essential. Main points of Non-Cooperation movement were:

- the nationalization of education,
- the promotion of indigenous goods,
- the popularisation of Charkha and Khadi,
- the enrolment of a volunteer corps,
- boycott of law courts, educational institutions, official functions, and British goods,
- the surrender of honours and titles conferred by the British.

11.5.2 Main Phases of the Non-Cooperation

The campaign for non-cooperation and boycott started with great enthusiasm from early 1921. In the first phase from January to March 1921, the main emphasis was on the boycott of schools, colleges,., law courts and the use of Charkha. There was widespread student unrest and top lawyers like C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru gave up their legal practice. This phase was followed by the second phase starting from April 1921. In this phase the basic objectives were the collection of Rs. one crore for the Tilak Swaraj Fund by August 1921, enrolling one crore Congress members and installing 20 lakh Charkhas by 30 June. In the third phase, starting from July, the stress was on boycott of foreign cloth, boycott of the forthcoming visit of the Prince of Wales in November, 1921, popularisation of Charkha and Khadi, and Jail Bharo by Congress volunteers. In the last phase, from November I921,

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a shift towards radicalism was visible. The Congress volunteers rallied the people and the country was on the verge of a revolt. Gandhi decided to launch a no revenue campaign at Bardoli, and also a mass civil disobedience movement for freedom of speech, press and association.

11.5.3 Popular Response to the Movement and End of Movement

The economic boycott received support from the Indian business group, because the textile industry had benefited from the nationalist emphasis on the use of Swadeshi. The response from the students and women was very effective. Thousands of students left government schools and colleges; and joined national schools and colleges. The newly started national institutions like the Kashi Vidyapeeth, the Gujarat Vidyapeeth and the Jamia Millia lslamia and others accommodated many students although several others were disappointed. Students became active volunteers of the movement. Women also came forward. They gave up Purdah and offered their jewellery for the Tilak Fund. They joined the movement in large numbers and took active part in picketing before the shops selling foreign cloth and liquor. The most important landmark of this movement was the massive participation of the peasants and workers in it. In rural areas and some other places, the peasants turned against the landlords and the traders. This gave a new dimension to the movement of 1921-22.

Congress volunteers were fired at by the police at Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur district in U.P. In retaliation the infuriated mob killed 21 policemen. This violent incident shocked Gandhi and he suspended the Non-Cooperation Movement. He also postponed the proposed civil disobedience at Bardoli. Many Congressmen were shocked and surprised by Gandhi's decision. On 12 February 1922 the Congress Working Committee meeting at Bardoli condemned the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura. It endorsed the suspension of the mass civil-disobedience movement. The same day Gandhi started his five day fast as a penance. Thus, the first non-cooperation virtually came to an end. Gandhi was arrested on 10 March 1922 and was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

11.6 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

The Civil Disobedience Movement was launched when Gandhiji, along with a group of chosen volunteers, began the Dandi March to break the Salt Law. Following him, people all over the country broke salt laws and courted arrests. Besides breaking of the salt laws, no-tax and no-revenue campaigns were also launched in certain areas. There was also defiance of the forest laws which prohibited the use of forests by the locals. Noticing the gravity of the situation, the British government called a Round Table Conference and invited the Congress for talk. Gandhiji represented the Congress and the movement was temporarily withdrawn to facilitate the talk. However, the talk proved to be a failure due the divisive policies of the colonial rulers. This led to the resumption of the movement which, however, failed to acquire its earlier intensity.

11.6.1 Gandhi's Efforts to Gain Concessions

Before launching the movement Gandhi tried for compromise with the Government. He placed eleven points relating to administrative reform and

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stated that if Lord Irwin accepted them there would be no need for agitation. The important demands were:

1) The Rupee-Sterling ratio should reduced to Is 4d,
2) Land revenue should be reduced by half and made a subject of legislative control,
3) Salt tax should be abolished and also the government monopoly over manufacturing of salt,
4) Salaries of the highest grade services should be reduced by half,
5) Military expenditure should be reduced by 50% be begin with,
6) Protection for Indian textile and coastal shipping,
7) All political prisoners should be discharged.

To many observers this charter of demands seemed a climb-down from Purna Swaraj. The Government response to Gandhi's proposal was negative.

11.6.2 Beginning of the Movement

Gandhi took the decision to start the movement. On 12 March 1930 Gandhi started the Historic March from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi beach accompanied by his 78 selected followers. There Gandhi and his followers broke the law by manufacturing salt from the sea. The Programme of the movement was as follows:

a) Salt law should be violated everywhere.
b) Students should leave colleges and government servants should resign from service.
c) Foreign clothes should be burnt.
d) No taxes should be paid to the government.
e) Women should stage a Dharna at liquor shops, etc.

The choice of salt as the central issue appeared puzzling initially. Events quickly revealed the enormous potentialities of this choice. "You planned a fine strategy round the issue of salt". Irwin later admitted to Gandhi. Salt was a concrete and a universal grievance of the rural poor, which was almost unique in having no socially divisive implications. With regard to food habits salt was a daily necessity of the people. It also carried with it the implications of trust, hospitality, mutual obligations. In this sense it had a far-reaching emotional content. Moreover the breaking of the salt law meant a rejection of the Government's claims on the allegiance of the people. In coastal areas where over the previous century indigenous salt production had been ruined by British imports, illegal manufacture of salt could provide the people a small income which was not unimportant. The manufacture of salt also became a part of Gandhian methods of constructive work like Khadi production. Rural Gandhian bases everywhere provided the initial volunteers for the salt satyagraha. Above all, the Dandi March and the subsequent countrywide violation of the salt law provided a tremendously impressive demonstration of the power of non-violent mass struggle. What came to be undermined was the entire moral authority of the government and its paternalistic self-image of being the saviour of the poor.

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11.6.3 Movement Spreads

Social boycott of police and lower-level administrative officials led to many resignations. That the British realized the gravity of the threat was revealed by the sheer brutality of repression. But the spectacle of unarmed, unresisting satyagrahis standing up to abominable torture aroused local sympathy and respect as noting else could have done. The movement, unlike Non-Cooperation, implied violations of law, arrests, and government repression right from the beginning. The number of jail goers was 92,214 which was more than three times the 1921-22 figures. Support from Ahmedabad mill owners, Bombay merchants and petty traders (industrialists in the city being less enthusiastic), and Calcutta Marwaris headed by GD Birla can be cited as example of the solidarity of the Capitalists with the national movement at this stage. For example, the merchants in many towns took a collective pledge to give up import of foreign goods for some months. Combined with picketing and the overall impact of the Depression, there was a spectacular collapse of British cloth imports, from 1248 million yards in 1929-30 to only 523 million yards in 1930-31.

A novel and remarkable feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement was the widespread participation of women. The handful of postgraduate women students in 1930s still went to class escorted by their teachers, and yet there were women from far more socially conservative professional, business or peasant families, picketing shops, facing lathis, and going to jail. However, this sudden active role of women in politics did not produce any significant change in the conditions of women in or outside the family. The deeply religious ambience of Gandhi's saintly image was perhaps even more crucial: joining the Congress movement was a new religious mission.

11.6.4 Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Round Table Conference and Second Phase

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact had ambiguous consequences. Many others besides Nehru felt dismayed by the unexpected halt, long before attaining the proclaimed goal of Purna Swaraj, and peasants who had sacrificed land and goods at the Congress behest must have felt particularly let down. There was even a black flag demonstration against Gandhi when the Karachi Congress opened a few days after the execution of Bhagat Singh. The session, however, ratified the new policy, with Nehru, having spent some sleepless nights, moving the key resolution accepting the Delhi agreement.

Gandhi's entry into the Second Round Table Conference also proved a virtual fiasco. The first Conference, in January 1931, with Civil Disobedience still at large and the Congress boycotting it had been marked by Ramsay Macdonald's novel offer of responsible government at the centre. But its two characteristics were a Federal assembly on which princes who joined would nominate their own members, and a series of "reservations and safeguards" to maintain British control over defence, external affairs, finance, and economy. Having accepted this as the framework for discussion, Gandhi as sole Congress representative at the second RTC found himself involved in endless squabbles with Muslim leaders, the Scheduled Caste representative Bhimrao Ambedkar, who had started demanding separate electorates for untouchables, and the princes. The British watched this gleefully. The Congress had clearly been outmanoeuvred.

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When the movement was restarted, 120000 people were jailed in the first three months – an indication, however, not so much of a more extensive movement than in 1930, but of more intense and systematic repression, for the figures soon began to decline fairly fast. As the mass movement gradually declined in face of ruthless repression, political 'realism' combined with economic calculations of certain sections of Indians pushed Indian big business towards collaboration.

Gandhi in jail not unnaturally began to think in terms of an honourable retreat. He suspended Civil Disobedience temporarily in May 1933, and formally withdrew it in April 1934. The Mahatma decided to make Harijan work the central plank of his new rural constructive programme. This was his answer to the British policy of Divide and Rule which found expression in the official Communal Award declared early in 1932 by Ramsay Macdonald. The Award provided for separate Hindu, Untouchables and Muslim electorates for the new Federal legislatures, treating Hindus and Dalits as two separate political entities. Gandhi opposed this Award. He demanded reservation of more seats for Harijans within the Hindu electorate. Ambedkar, the Dalit leader, accepted Gandhi's stand.

11.7 BACKGROUND OF THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

The unfavourable War situation and international pressures had compelled the British to seek an amicable settlement with India and obtain her active support in the War. Sir Strafford Cripps landed in India with a set of proposals and negotiated with leaders of various political parties.

11.7.1 Cripps Proposals

Some of the Cripps proposals, embodied in a Draft Declaration were:

- Dominion Status would be granted to India immediately after the War with the right to secede.
- Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, a constitution-making body would be set up. It will consist of members from British India as well as Native States.
- The constitution so framed after the War would he accepted by the British Government on the condition that any Indian province could, if so desired, remain outside the Indian Union and negotiate directly with Britain, and
- The actual control of defence and military operations would be retained by the British Government.

This Declaration was rejected by almost all the Indian parties. The Congress did not want to rely on future promises. It wanted a responsible Government with full powers and also a control over the country's defence. Gandhi termed the proposal as "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank".

Thus, the Cripps Mission failed to pacify the Indians. On 8 August 1942 the AICC passes the Quit India Resolution. This was passed after deliberating at great length on the international and national situation. Gandhi told the British to quit and "leave India in God's hand". He exhorted all sections to participate in the Movement and stressed "every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide". His message was 'do or die'.

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11.7.2 Call for 'Do or Die' and the Beginning of Movement

The Congress gave the call for ousting British but it did not give any concrete line of action to be adopted by the people. The Government had been making preparations to crush the Movement. On the morning of 9th August all prominent Congress leaders including Gandhi were arrested. The news of leaders' arrest shook the people and they came to streets protesting against it. Before his arrest on 9th August 1942 Gandhi had given the following message to the country:

"Everyone is free to go the fullest length under Ahimsa to complete deadlock by strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis must go out to die not to live. They must seek and face death. It is only when individuals go out to die that the nation will survive. Karenge Ya Marenge (do or die)."

The news of his arrest along with other Congress leaders led to unprecedented popular outbursts in different parts of the country. There were hartals, demonstrations and processions in cities and towns. The Congress leadership gave the call, but it was the people who launched the Movement. Since all the recognized leaders – central, provincial or local – had been arrested, the young and more militant cadres, particularly students, with socialist leanings took over as leaders at local levels in their areas.

11.7.3 Broadening of Movement and Government Repression

In the initial stages, the Movement was conducted along non-violent lines. It was the repressive policy of the government which provoked the people to violence. The Gandhian message of non-violent struggle was pushed into the background and people devised their own methods of struggle. These included:

- attacks on government buildings, police stations and post offices,
- attacks on railway stations, and sabotaging rail lines,
- cutting off the telegraph wires, telephones and electric power lines,
- disrupting road traffic by destroying bridges, and
- workers going on strike, etc.

Most of these attacks were to check the movement of the military and the police, which were being used by the government to crush the Movement. In many areas, the government lost all control and the people established Swaraj. We cite a few such cases:

- In Maharashtra, a parallel government was established in Satara which continued to function for a long time.
- In Bengal, Tamluk Jatiya Sarkar functioned for a long time in Midnapore district. This national government had various departments like Law and Order, Health, Education, Agriculture, etc., along with a postal system of its own and arbitration courts.
- People established Swaraj in Talacher in Orissa.
- In many parts of eastern U.P. and Bihar (Azamgarh, Ballia, Ghazipur, Monghyr, Muzzaffarpur, etc.) police stations were overrun by the people and government authority uprooted.

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The Movement had initially been strong in the urban areas but soon it was the populace of rural areas which kept the banner of revolt aloft for a longer time. The Movement got a massive response from the people throughout India.

In Bombay, the Socialist leaders continued their underground activities under leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali. The most daring act of the underground movement was the establishment of Congress Radio with Usha Mehta as its announcer. This radio carried broadcasts for a long time. There was massive participation by the students who spread to the countryside and played a role in guiding the people there.

11.7.4 Repression

The Government had geared all its forces to suppress the popular upsurge. Arrests, detention, police firings, burning of Congress offices, etc. were the methods adopted by the Government.

- By the end of 1942 in U.P. alone 16,089 persons were arrested. Throughout India the official figures for arrests stood at 91,836 by end of 1943.
- The number of people killed in police firings was 658 till September 1942, and by 1943 it was 1060. But these were official figures. Many more had died and innumerable wounded.
- In Midnapore alone, the Government forces had burnt 31 Congress camps and 164 private houses. There were 74 cases of rape, out of which 46 were committed by the police in a single day in one village on 9 January 1943.
- The Government accepted having used aeroplanes to gun people at 5 places. These were: Giriak near Patna: Bhagalpur district; near Ranaghat in Nadia district; Monghyr district and near Talcher city.
- Collective punitive fines were extorted from the residents in the areas affected by the upsurge. For example in U.P. the total amount involved in such fines was Rs. 28,32,000 and by February 1943 Rs. 25,00,000 was realised.

The Quit India Movement collapsed, but not without demonstrating the determination of the masses to do away with British rule.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Assess Gandhi's role in Non-Cooperation Movement.

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2) Discuss in detail the popular response towards Civil-Disobedience and Quit India Movement.

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11.8 LET US SUM UP

After First World War, the national movement become more intense and became a real mass movement with various social groups and classes joining its ranks. Many factors contributed to this development. One of them was the entry of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who came to India after gaining experience of mass mobilization against racial discrimination in South Africa. Gandhi used new kind of ideas and techniques which made it easier for ordinary people to participate in the movement. He became the undisputed leader of the national movement by 1920 and remained so until independence was won in 1947. In all his campaigns and agitation there was a fair inclusion of issues and grievance of ordinary people and his movement was laced with moral fabric. So his appeal was evident in three major movements and other local agitations. He transformed the people of India with weapons of satyagraha and ahimsa which were effectively used against the repressive colonial state.

11.9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sub-section 11.4.1
2) See Section 11.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 11.5
2) See Sections 11.6 and 11.7

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UNIT 12 COMMUNALISM : GENESIS, GROWTH AND PARTITION OF INDIA

Structure

12.0 OBJECTIVES

You all are quite familiar with the term 'Communalism'. This unit intends to answer some of the questions regarding communalism in India. After reading this unit you can:

- explain what communalism is and distinguish between various types of communalism,
- see how communalism emerged in the Indian society and polity,
- evaluate the role of the various forces which enabled it to grow,
- trace its development in the early 20th century,
- explain the nature of communalism in the last decade of British rule,
- get an idea of the background to the demand for Pakistan,
- trace the political developments leading up to the partition of India, and
- assess the role played by Muslim League, the British and the Congress in the creation of Pakistan.

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12.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the major priorities of any developing country is to maintain a unity of its people. In the history of modern India, such a unity was put to a severe test by the growing communalism. Whereas the Indian National Movement aimed at achieving the unity of all Indian people, communalism sought to divide them along religious lines, by creating and spreading false barriers of religious communities, religious interests and ultimately religious nations also. This unit will try to tell you how communalism in India was born and thrived because of a combination of various forces and their development. For instance, the peculiarity of the socio-economic development of India in the 19th century, the impact of the colonial rule as well as the role of certain colonial policies, the weakness of the anti-communal nationalist forces and finally the active role played by the communal organizations.

The 1940s represent the most crucial and decisive phase of communalism. It was in this period that the biggest communal demand– the demand for Pakistan– was put forward, and popularised by the Muslim League. This period also witnessed the actual coming into being of Pakistan in 1947. This Unit attempts to explain the process of the formation of Pakistan, and gives you a summary of the major events which led to it.

12.2 WHAT IS COMMUNALISM?

Generally speaking, Communalism is a belief that all those who have a common religion also have, as a result, common social, political, cultural and economic interests and identities. In other words, it is the notion that religion forms the base of the society and a basic unit of division in the society: that it is religion that determines all the other interests of man. To understand it better, let us look at it differently. Human being is a multi-faceted social being, who can, at the same time have a number of identities. His / her identity can be based on his / her country, region, gender, occupation, position within the family, caste or religion. A communalist would choose only the religious identity from this wide range and emphasize it out of proportions. As a result, social relationship, political behaviour, and economic struggles might be defined on the basis of the religious identity. So, briefly put, it is the super-imposition of the religious category over all others, which becomes the starting point of communalism.

Briefly, the communal propaganda and arguments had three levels:

i) that the interests of all the numbers of a religious community were the same; for example, it was argued that a Muslim Zamindar and a peasant had common interests because both were Muslims, (or Hindus or Sikhs as the case might be);

ii) that the interests of the members of one religious community were different from the members of another religious community. In other words this meant that all Hindus had different interests from all Muslims and vice-versa; and

iii) that not only were these interests different, but also antagonistic and conflicting. This, in other words meant that Hindus and Muslims could not co-exist in peace because of conflicting interests.

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12.3 MYTHS REGARDING COMMUNALISM

Communalism has been a widely misunderstood phenomenon and, as a result, there have been many myths about it. It is therefore very important to know what communalism is not. And while trying to understand communalism, it is important to keep the myths regarding communalism in mind.

1) As against popular notions communalism is not merely religion's entry into politics, or politics defined in religious terms. In other word, religion's entry into politics did not necessarily produce communalism. To take an example, two of the greatest secular leaders of the 20th century – Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad – were also deeply religious people and defined their politics in religious terms.

2) Communalism is not the result of religious differences. In other words, religious differences in themselves do not constitute the essence of communalism. For example, religious differences between the Hindus and Muslims had continued for centuries but they assumed the communal form only in the modern period. If fact, communalism is not a religious problem at all.

3) Communalism was not inherent in the Indian society, as has often been assumed. It was not a 'hang-over' of India's past. It was a product of certain peculiar circumstances and combination of forces. Communalism is a modern phenomenon, as modern as the emergence of colonial rule. It is to be explained by political and economic developments in the modern period of Indian history.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What do you understand by the term communalism? Write in 100 words.

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2) Which of the following statements are right (✓) or wrong (×)?

   i) Communalism is not the result of religious differences only.

   ii) Communalism was inherent in the Indian society.

   iii) Communalism was a modern phenomenon.

   iv) Communal arguments were false and were not rooted in the Indian reality.

12.4 EMERGENCE AND GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM

What was the starting point of this problem? The genesis of communalism should be seen with the British conquest of India, which had a tremendous impact on the society and economy of India.

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12.4.1 Socio-Economic Factors

The British conquest brought about a change in the power structure which generally penetrated down to all the sections of the Indian society. To begin with, the British conquest marked the decadence of the upper class Muslims. It was particularly so in Bengal, where they lost their semi-monopoly in employment in the upper posts of army, administration and judiciary. They were also slowly evicted from their dominant position in land-holding.

Moreover, Muslims adapted later than Hindus to such British novelties as English education, the new professions, posts in the administration, and culture. Consequently an intellectual awakening, resulting in a re-assessment of the old beliefs, customs and values, was also late among the Muslims, compared to the Hindus. This time 'lag' between Ram Mohan Roy and Syed Ahmed Khan for instance, would help to explain a feeling of weakness and insecurity on the part of the Muslims, leading to a reliance on religion and traditional ways of thinking.

12.4.2 Role of British Policy

The British policy holds a very special responsibility for favouring the growth of communalism. If communalism could flourish in India and reach monstrous proportions, which it did in 1947, it was possible largely because of the support it received from the British government. But before we discuss the British policy in detail certain clarifications might be made.

The British did not create communalism. We have seen that certain socio-economic and cultural differences already existed. They were not created but only taken advantage of by the British, to serve their political end. It is, therefore, quite obvious that the British policy of 'divide and rule', that we are going to talk about, could succeed only because something in the internal social, economic, cultural and political conditions of society favoured its success. It is important to note that conditions were remarkably favourable for the use and growth of communalism as well as for the policy of 'divide and rule'. There were two main objectives before the government in Post 1857 Revolt period.

1) To make some friends in the society, to offer patronage to some sections mainly in order to exercise influence and extend control and thereby strengthen its base in the society.

2) To prevent unity of the Indian people. If all the sections of the society could unite under any ideological influence, they could threaten the British Empire. Therefore communal ideology had to be used and spread to deny the oneness of the Indian people. This was done more effectively in the 20th century when the communal demands and organizations were encouraged to negate the legitimacy and credibility of the nationalist demands, ideology and organization. Thus on the one hand, all attempts were made to keep the Muslims away from the Congress, and then the claims of the Congress were run down on the grounds that it did not represent the Muslims!

Communalism served the government in yet another way. Communal deadlock and the worsening communal situation could also be used as a justification for the continuation of the British rule. The argument they gave

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that the Indian people were divided amongst themselves, and were therefore incapable of governing themselves, if the British rule ended.

12.4.3 Weaknesses in the National Movement

The growth of communalism in the 20th century could be checked by a nationalist upsurge. The communal ideology could be defeated by the nationalist forces and ideology. But the Indian National Congress, as a representative of the nationalist forces and ideology, failed to prevent the spread of communalism among the people. Although fully committed to secularism and nationalism, and desirous to bring about a unity of the Indian people, the Indian National Movement fought a battle against the communal forces but lost ultimately due to a variety of reasons. To begin with, the Congress could not comprehensively understand the nature of communalism. As a result of this, the Congress did not have a central strategy to combat communalism.

Besides, certain Hindu revivalist tendencies entered into the national movement and successfully prevented its attempts to reach out to Muslims and incorporate them into its fold. Also the use of certain religious symbols (like Ramarajya for instance) acted as a barrier. However, while pointing out the limitations, the complexity of the problems should not be ignored. It became very difficult to solve the communal problem particularly because of the attitude of the Government. The British government did all it could to prevent a settlement between various political groups. No matter what the Congress offered to the Muslims, the Government always offered more, thereby making the arrangement redundant.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write 100 words on the role of British Policy towards communalism.

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2) Discuss the weaknesses of the Congress to check the growth of communalism.

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12.5 COMMUNALISM IN THE 20TH CENTURY

In this section, we shall see some of the major developments in the 20th century in relation to the communal problem. We shall discuss them very briefly and see how they affected the communal problem. Some of the points made in the earlier section regarding the British policy and the Congress attitude will also be dealt with in this section.

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12.5.1 Partition of Bengal and the Formation of the Muslim League

The partition of Bengal (1905) may have started as an administrative measure, but it was soon transformed into a major political advantage for the government as it intended to convert Bengal into areas of Hindu majority and Muslim majority. It was thus the result of the British desire to weaken the nationalism of Bengal and consolidate a Muslim block against it. As the Viceroy Curzon said:

"The partition would invest the Muslims of East Bengal with a unity which they had not enjoyed since the days of old Mussalman Viceroys and Kings".

The partition and the subsequent Swadeshi Movement were followed by the formation of the All India Muslim League towards the end of 1906, with official patronage. It consisted of a group of big Zamindars, ex-bureaucrats and other upper class Muslims, like Aga Khan, the Nawab of Dacca and Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk. Its motive was to thwart the young Muslims from going over to the Congress, and thereby into the nationalist fold. The Muslim League was formed as purely a loyalist body whose only job was to look up to the government for favour and patronage.

Another important feature of this period was the growth of Muslim separatism, because of

- the surfacing of Hindu revivalistic tendencies during the Swadeshi movement,
- the British propaganda that the partition of Bengal would benefit the Muslims, and
- spurts of communal violence: a number of communal riots broke out in Eastern Bengal, in the period following the Swadeshi Movement.

12.5.2 Separate Electorates

The declaration of separate electorates in the legislative bodies in 1909, as a part of the Morley-Minto reforms is a major landmark in the history of communalism. Separate electorates meant grouping of constituencies, voters and elected candidates on the basis of religion. In practical terms it meant introducing Muslims constituencies, Muslim voters, and Muslim candidates. It also meant that non-Muslim voter could vote for a Muslim candidate. The election campaign and politicisation was thus strictly confined within the walls of each religion. All this was to have disastrous consequences.

The introduction of the separate electorates was based on the notion that the Indian society was a mere collection of interests and groups and that it was basically divided between the Hindus and Muslims. Indian Muslims were on the other hand, regarded as "a separate, distinct and monolithic community". It was also based on the motive of entrusting power in the hands of potential allies as well as preventing Hindu-Muslim unity.

According to these reforms, the Muslims were assured that they would be granted representation in the councils, not merely according to their 'numerical strength', but also according to their 'political importance'.

The impact of the separate electorates was as follows:

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- it created the institutional structures containing separatism,
- it was to produce severe constraints on the Congress and to limit its space for nationalist activities,
- it was to activate the communal groups and organizations, and
- it ensured the impossibility of a common agreement among Indian political groups.

12.5.3 Lucknow Pact

Lucknow Pact (1916) was an attempt made by the Indian organizations, namely the Congress and the Muslim League, to arrive at a settlement. The Congress conceded separate electorates as a temporary arrangement, in order to obtain Muslim League's support. Two things need to be remembered regarding the Lucknow Pact:

- It was an arrangement between the leaders, not between the people. The Congress League settlement was wrongly equated with a Hindu-Muslim settlement, the assumption being that the Muslim League truly represented the Muslims,
- Soon the Lucknow Pact became redundant because of the Government of India Act, 1919, which granted much more to Muslims than the Lucknow Pact.

12.6 NEHRU REPORT AND THE PARTING OF THE WAYS WITH JINNAH

The arrival of the Simon Commission and its near unanimous boycott by all sections of political opinion, once again provided an opportunity for unity. A section of the Muslim League, under the leadership of Jinnah, took the initiative and was willing to give up separate electorates in favour of joint electorates, if certain conditions were met. These were:

- 1/3rd representation for the Muslims in the central legislature,
- separation of Sind from Bombay as a separate province,
- reform in the North-West Frontier provinces, and
- Muslims representation in the legislative council in proportion to their population in Punjab and Bengal.

These demands were accepted by the Congress, which opened up prospects for unity. But its rejection in uncompromising terms by the Hindu Mahasabha at the All Parties Conference (l928) complicated matters. The incompatibility between the League and Mahasabha frustrated all attempts at unity.

On February 12, 1928, All Parties Conference called at Delhi attended by the representatives of 29 organizations in response to the appointment of Simon Commission. The All Parties Conference appointed a committee with Motilal Nehru as its chairman. The purpose was to consider and determine the principles of the Constitution for India. Some of the key recommendations of Nehru Report were as follows:

- India should be given Dominion Status with the Parliamentary form

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of Government with bi-cameral legislature that consists of senate and House of Representatives.

- The senate will comprise of two hundred members elected for seven years, while the House of Representatives should consist of five hundred members elected for five years. Governor-General will act on the advice of executive council. It was to be collectively responsible to the parliament.
- There should be Federal form of Government in India with Residuary powers to be vested in Centre. There will be no separate electorate for minorities because it awakens communal sentiments therefore it should be scrapped and joint electorate should be introduced.
- There will be no reserved seats for communities in Punjab and Bengal. However, reservation of Muslim seats could be possible in the provinces where Muslim population should be at least ten percent.
- Judiciary should be independent from the Executive.
- There should be the Muslim Representation at Centre.
- Sind should be separated from Bombay provided it proves to be financially self sufficient.

The impact of the Nehru Report was significant. It led to the estrangement of Jinnah, who called it a 'Parting of the Ways' with the Congress, went back to the separate electorates, and formulated his famous fourteen points (including separate electorates, reservation of seats in the centre and provinces, reservation of jobs for Muslims, creation of new Muslim majority provinces, etc.) which became the text of the communal demands.

12.7 TOWARDS MASS COMMUNALISM

Muslim League had, hitherto, been an elite organization, dominated by the princes and the Zamindars and had absolutely no base among the masses. In order to succeed in the electoral politics and be in a better bargaining position vis-à-vis other dominant groups, it was important to have a mass base and be a popular organization, much like the Congress.

By 1937 all the fourteen points of Jinnah had been granted by the government. And yet he found himself nowhere! He was just not able to carry himself and the League, of which he had become the permanent President, to a position of political respectability. Therefore, it was important to maximise the league's membership and also to place the demand at a much higher pitch, since all the other demands (like separate electorates, reservation of seat, etc.) had been conceded.

In order to achieve these two-fold tasks, Jinnah did the following:

- A massive campaign for the popularisation of the League was launched. The Muslim League actually broke out of its elite shell and began to acquire a mass character (although among Muslim masses only). Membership fee was reduced, provincial committees were formed and the party programme was also transformed so as to acquire a socio-economic content.

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- An equally strong campaign was launched to denounce and condemn the Congress ministries. They were shown to represent Hindu Raj and hostile to Muslim minorities. This was the surest way of creating a Hindu-Muslim divide. The Congress was asked to concentrate only on the Hindus, as it was seen by Jinnah as a Hindu Body.
- In 1940, at the Lahore session, Jinnah came up with the two-nation theory. It said that Muslims were not a minority, they were a nation. Hindus and Muslims, consisted of two nations, as they were different people economically, politically, socially, culturally, and historically. Therefore the Muslims of India should have a sovereign state for themselves. Hence the demand for Pakistan as a separate homeland for Muslims was born.

As a result of all that has been discussed above, communalism began to emerge as a mass force. This was to lead to Pakistan in 1947.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What do you understand by separate electorates? Write in about 100 words.

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2) Write five lines on the Lucknow Pact.

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3) How did the Muslim League acquire a mass-base?

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12.8 THE LAST PHASE OF BRITISH POLICY AND PARTITION

As mentioned earlier the growth of Muslim communalism was considerably aided by the whole-hearted official backing given to it by the British Government. After the outbreak of the Second World War the Muslim League was assiduously fostered by Viceroy Linlithgow. The Pakistan demand was used to counter the demand of the Congress that the British should promise that Indian would be free after the War and as proof of their sincerity, transfer actual control of the government to Indians immediately. The British pointed out the Hindus and Muslims must come to an agreement on how power was to be transferred before the process could begin. The

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League was officially recognized as the representative voice of Muslims (even though its performance in the last elections hardly substantiated this claim) and promised that no political settlement would be made unless it was acceptable to the League. This was a blanket power of veto, which Jinnah was to use to good effect after the War had ended.

Cripps' proposals gave a fillip to the activities of the Muslim League and provided legitimacy to the Pakistan demand by accommodating it in their provision for provincial autonomy. At a time when the demand had hardly been taken seriously by Indians, its sympathetic consideration by officialdom was a great service to the cause of Pakistan.

The elections were duly held in the winter of 1945-46. By the time the elections took place, the League – following the congenial aftermath of the Simla Conference, and dangling the carrot of Pakistan – was in a favourable situation to deal with its separate Muslim electorate. To the Muslim traders and middle classes the dream of Musalmanon-ki-Hukumat and the Indian Muslim's special right of self-determination, along with the fervent religious cry of "Islam in danger", were dished out. Although the Congress was at the crest of its popularity, especially with the people's anticipations of the coming of independence, it was nevertheless not in a position in such religiously frenzied atmosphere to carry the bulk of Muslim voters with it. The outcome of the elections, particularly the respective positions of the Congress and the League, clearly brought all these out.

The Congress won overwhelmingly in the General (non-Muslim) constituencies, securing 91.3 per cent votes, winning 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and obtaining majorities in all the provinces except Sind, Punjab and Bengal. The spectacular Congress victories, however, could not diminish the significance that the Government had already thrust upon the Muslim electorate. From the British point of view, and at the negotiation table to be presided by them what mattered more in 1946 than the massive national mandate for the Congress was the League's ability to goad the Muslim voters to its side – by hook or by crook. Apparently in this the League attained remarkable successes by polling 86.6 per cent of the Muslim votes, winning all the 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and grabbing 442 out of 509 Muslim seats in the provinces. But despite all its achievement, the League could not establish its Swaraj on those Muslim-majority provinces which it was demanding for Pakistan. It lost NWFP and Assam to the Congress and failed to dislodge the Unionists from Punjab. Even the League ministries that were set up in Bengal and Sind hinged precariously on official and European support. The fact was that the League's claim for Muslim support had hardly ever been tested in undivided India. The elections were held not only on the basis of separate electorate, which had been devised to keep the Muslims away from the national mainstream, but also on the strength of severely restricted franchise – barely 10 per cent of the total population.

Once the main parties emerged from the limited elections in their strength, as anticipated more or less by the British, the Attlee Government lost no time in commencing negotiations with them. A high-powered mission of three British cabinet members (Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for

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India: Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; and A.V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty) was sent to India to find out ways and means of a negotiated, peaceful transfer of power in India. As it had already been sensed in the British circles, time was running out of the British hands for all practical purposes, and India had reached the high point of ferment by March, 1946 with popular unrest finding intermittent expressions throughout the country. There was also the British fear that the disquietude of the people might take shape of another countrywide "mass movement or a revolution", which it was in the power of the Congress to start, and which, the Viceroy felt, "we are not certain that we can control". The Cabinet Mission, therefore, arrived in India to wrest the initiative. Aided by the Viceroy, it held discussion with the Indian leaders till June 1946 for setting the constitutional future of India, and for deciding upon an interim Indian Government.

Following a series of long-drawn deliberations with the Indian leaders of kinds, which had often run into stalemates on account of Jinnah's brinkmanship over Pakistan and the Muslim right of self-determination, the Mission eventually came up with a complicated, but somewhat plausible plan for wriggling out of the Indian impasse. Although the Viceroy and one of its members (Alexander) had been sympathetic towards Jinnah, the Mission was unable to accept the League's demand for a full-fledged Pakistan (comprising the whole of all the Muslim majority areas) on the ground that it would not be acceptable to the non-Muslims who formed majorities in West Bengal and Eastern Punjab, as well as in Assam proper. This would necessitate such a bifurcation of Bengal, Punjab and Assam which would go against all regional and linguistic ties, create insurmountable economic and administrative problems, and yet might not satisfy the League. Having thus rejected both the concepts of a larger and a smaller Pakistan, the Mission offered the plan of a very loose union of all the Indian territories under a centre that would control merely the defence, the foreign affairs and the communications, leaving all other subjects to the existing provincial legislatures. The provincial legislatures would then elect a Constituent Assembly, with each province being allotted a specified number of seats proportionate to its population and distributed strength-wise among its various communities. The members so elected "will divide up into three sections" – Section A for the non-Muslim majority provinces (Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Orissa and Madras), Section B for the Muslim-majority provinces in the north-west (Sind, NWFP and Punjab) and Section C for the same in the north-east (Bengal and Assam). All these sections would have the authority to draw up provincial constitutions and, if necessary, group constitutions, and setting up thereby provincial and sectional legislatures and executives. As the completion of all these long-term arrangements would take considerable time, the Mission proposed a short-term measure – the formation immediately of an Interim Government at the Centre, enjoying the support of the major political parties, and with the Indians holding all the portfolios.

The Mission's plan was intended to be a compromise, by placating the Congress through the rejection of the Pakistan scheme and by mollifying the League through the creation of autonomous Muslim-majority areas is some proximity. At the outset, therefore, both the Congress and the League were

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inclined to accept the plan. But differences soon surfaced over the provisions for forming sections or groups of provinces. The League interpreted the groupings to be compulsory, for that might brighten up the possibility of a future full-fledged Pakistan by bulldozing the Congress-administered Muslim-majority provinces of NWFP (in section B) and Assam (in section C) into it (in their respective sections the Congress majorities from NWFP and Assam would be reduced to helpless minorities). It was precisely because of the opposition of NWFP and Assam to their being dragged into Sections B and C that the Congress wanted the grouping to be optional. The Congress was also critical of the absence of any provision for the elected members from the princely states in the proposed Constituent Assembly, though it appeared to be willing to swallow the limited and indirect nature of electing the Constituent Assembly, blatantly contrary to its past demand for such an election on adult franchise. By the end of July 1946, the Congress and the League decided against trying out the Cabinet Mission plan any further, mainly on account of their difference over the grouping system, but partly because of the Mission's inability to clarify its intensions.

12.9 THE COMMUNAL CARNAGE AND INTERIM GOVERNMENT

The setback over the Cabinet Mission plan so exasperated the League that it wanted forthwith to force the situation through "Direct Action", or give concrete expression to its postelection slogan, 'Ladke Lenge Pakistan' ("we shall have Pakistan by force"). The outcome was the communal carnage that began first on the Direct Action Day (16th August 1946) in Calcutta, and then in a chain of reactions spread over other areas of the country, notably in Bombay, eastern Bengal and Bihar, a certain part of the U.P., NWFP and Punjab. In Calcutta, the League rowdies, encouraged by the League Premier of Bengal, Suhrawardy, had a field day on 16th August by suddenly resorting to large scale violent attacks on the non-Muslims. Once the element of surprise was over, the Hindus and Sikhs also hit back. The army, stationed at the very heart of the city, took its own time to react, and when it did sluggishly move to restore order 4,000 had already been killed in three days, and 10,000 injured.

Riots erupted in Bombay in September 1946, but not so frenziedly as in Calcutta. Even then, more than 300 persons lost their lives in stray incidents there. In October 1946, communal riots broke out furiously in Noakhali and Tippera, leaving 400 dead and resulting in widespread violation of women, loot and arson. Bihar communal riots towards the end of October left more than 7,000 dead. U.P. was not lagging far behind, and at Garhamukhteswar alone approximately 1,000 people were slaughtered. The riots in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Attock and Rawalpindi, had killed about 5,000 by the middle of 1947. These were, however, the mere beginnings, for the communal riots continued to blaze very high throughout 1947 and the earlier part of 1948, resulting in deaths and injuries to several lakhs of people, abduction and rape of countless women, immense destruction of personal properties and innumerable desecration of religious places. Millions had to become refugees, and whereas in some localities (like Punjab) a wholesale exchange

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of population took place, in others (like Bengal) people continued to leave their places in waves for a long time to come. In the sheer extent of human suffering and dehumanization, and in the total upsetting of the country's social and economic fabric, the fratricide in the Indian sub-continent between 1946 and 1948 perhaps had only a few parallels in the annals of civilization.

It was coinciding practically with the outbreak of the communal carnage that an Interim Government at the centre - the one which the Cabinet Mission proposed as a short-term measure in its plan - came into existence in September 1946. To begin with, the Viceroy's attempts at its formation met almost with the same difficulty they faced in the Simla Conference, namely Jinnah's insistence on parity between 5 Hindu nominees of the Congress and 5 Muslim nominees of the League in such a Government, apart from 1 Sikh and one Scheduled Caste in it. As anticipated, the Congress rejected such a proposal of "parity", claimed the right to include any number of Hindus, Muslims and others in its list of nominees and demanded the new Government to function like a cabinet, and not like a mere advisory body to the Viceroy. Wavell would have called off his endeavours on the ground that nothing was likely to be achieved if the main parties continued to differ, which he contentedly did in Simla in June 1945. But the impending threat of mass-upsurge and worsening law and order necessitated him to go ahead with the idea of an Interim Government.

Elated apparently by the Viceregal gesture of giving them precedence over their League counterparts, and expecting the formation of the Interim Government to be to their advantage, as well as an advance towards the peaceful transfer of power, the Congress leaders opted on 2nd September for the making of a cabinet under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. As the situation unfolded later on, the Congress-dominated functioning of the Interim Government became on the whole an exercise in mis-adventures. Despite all its concern, it was in effect helpless in the face of the communal holocaust-to move the leisurely army, under a British commander in Chief, into the riot-afflicted areas. Being presided over by the Viceroy, the Interim Government was also not able sometimes to withstand his vetoing power. And its position worsened when Wavell persuaded the League leaders to join it on 26th October 1946, overlooking their persistence with the "Direct Action", and by agreeing to balance the Congress-nominated Scheduled Caste member. Thereafter the Interim Government, obstructed by its League members, and divided sharply into the Congress and the League camps, backed up by their warring followings within the bureaucracy, was reduced for all practical purposes to a figure head. The senior and venerable Congress leaders were no longer hopeful. Rather, they were too keen to come out of the labyrinth at any cost, if necessary by buying freedom at the exorbitant price of partitioning the nation, and by putting their life-long nationalist dreams at an auction.

The speed with which division was affected and the delay in announcing the awards of the Boundary Commission aggravated the tragedy of partition. These were Mountbatten's decisions. Mountbatten delayed the announcement of the Boundary Commission Award (even though it was ready by 12th August 1947) to disown responsibility for further complications. This created confusion for ordinary citizens as well as the officials. People living

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in the villages between Lahore and Amritsar stayed on in their homes in the belief that they were on the right side of the border. Migrations necessarily became a frenzied affair, often culminating in massacres.

12.10 LET US SUM UP

The partition of India was primarily the result of the persistent efforts of the Muslim League from 1940 onwards to obtain a separate homeland for the Muslims. Through an astute combination of constitutional methods and direct actions, the League, under Jinnah's stewardship, consolidated its position and forced the political situation into a deadlock, from which partition was the only escape. But Pakistan could not have been created without the help given by the British. British authorities used the communal card in their moves to counter the national movement which was growing from strength to strength. They gave credibility to the Pakistan demand, recognized the League as the sole representative of Muslims and gave the League the power to veto progress in political settlements. Even when their own interests inclined them towards leaving behind a United India, they proved incapable of standing up to Jinnah and tamely surrendered to the blackmail of direct action. Official inaction in checking the rapidly deteriorating communal situation reached a point from which partition appeared its long-standing commitment to a United India. Its weakness lay on two fronts. It failed to draw the Muslim masses into the national movement and was able to evolve a strategy to successfully fight communalism.

12.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 12.2

1. (i) ✓ (ii) × (iii) ✓ (iv) ✓

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub-section 12.4.2

2) See Sub-section 12.4.3

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Sub-section 12.5.2

2) See Sub-section 12.5.3

3) See Section 12.7

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UNIT 13 ADVENT OF FREEDOM : CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, ESTABLISHMENT OF REPUBLIC

Structure

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to explain:

- The various British plans for a negotiated transfer of power,
- The process of framing of a constitution for India and composition, purpose and functioning of Constituent Assembly,
- Colonial and Nationalist legacies of Post-Independent Indian polity, and
- Some features of Indian Democratic state.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The end of Britain in India as a ruling power and transfer of power to the indigenous nationalist leadership, according to one viewpoint, was the result of the weakening of Britain as the great Imperial Empire. The global hegemony of Britain was challenged by the latecomers in the areas of industrial production such as Germany, Italy and Japan during the world

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wars. The most important beneficiary of the rivalry was U.S.A., which emerged as the global banker and supplier of finance. USA's role in India's import-export business was around 6% of the total Indian foreign trade at the beginning of century but rose to about 11.4 % by 1945-46. Secondly, the Indian capitalist class grew rapidly during 1914-47. This was achieved primarily through import-substitution, by entering into economic areas earlier dominated by British capital. They also entered into new areas of industrial production made available by selective protection policy of the colonial government. By 1945-46, indigenous capitalists were controlling about 72-73% of the domestic market and accounted for over 80% of the deposits in the organized banking sector. Some scholars argue on the basis of these economic trends that the process of economic de-colonisation had already begun in the beginning of the twentieth century. There was also a substantial increase in the number of Indian officials especially in the lower and intermediate rungs of bureaucracy of the colonial state during the 1920s and 1930s. This had serious consequence on the potential of the colonial state to repress indigenous resistance to its rule. The Quit India movement confirmed the failure of colonial repression as well as erosion of British hegemony.

The other perspective sees the departure of British from India as a result of successive waves of mass-mobilization launched by the nationalist leadership. When the Second World War broke out in Europe in September 1939 the British political leaders wanted to hold on to their Indian empire. The Congress leadership wanted that the British define their war aims and felt offended by Viceroy Linlithgow's decision to declare India as a supporter of British war efforts against Germany without bothering to consult either the Congress leadership or the elected Congress provincial governments. Initially, they organized the symbolic individual Satyagraha but eventually led a powerful mass-upsurge in August 1942 in the name of 'Quit India' campaign. British authority collapsed in many parts of Bihar, Bengal, eastern UP, Orissa and parts of Bombay province. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose mobilized Indian soldiers of the British Indian army who had surrendered at Singapore into an army of national liberation, the Azad Hind Fauj. Some civilian were recruited from labourers in plantation in Malaya, and small shopkeepers of Indian origin, i.e., in Burma and Thailand. This was a blow to British control over the Indian army. The forward march of Azad Hind Fauj was blocked in the north-east in 1944. But its impact was strongly felt in the winter of 1945-46 as the British decided to hold the public trials of INA (Indian National Army) prisoners. Then there was the famous RIN (Royal Indian Navy) revolt by the naval ratings in February 1946. There was a display of solidarity by the people throughout the country with these anti-imperialist rebels.

13.2 TRANSFER OF POWER THROUGH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

Once the tide of the war turned in their favour, the British started realising by the end of 1944 generally that the Indian situation should not be allowed to remain where it stood after the Quit India Movement. They realized that

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it would be impossible to hold India by force for long. A dialogue, therefore, had to begin with the imprisoned Congress leaders.

13.2.1 The Simla Conference

Eventually permitted by the home authorities to set the ball of negotiations rolling, the Viceroy Wavell, ordered on 14 June 1945 the release of all the Congress Working Committee members, and invited them along with others, notably the League leaders, to join in a Conference in Simla (24th June - 14th July 1945) for setting up a new Executive Council at the Centre - practically Indian in composition - excepting the Commander in Chief and of course, the Viceroy, presiding over its deliberations. The Council would have equal representation from the so-called "Caste Hindus" and Muslims, and it should function within the existing constitutional arrangement without its being responsible to the legislature.

The British in fact were lukewarmly agreeable to discuss the making of a new constitution only at the actual end of the war. While attending the conference, the Congress naturally refused to be treated as a "Caste Hindu" body, and, asserting its secular nationalist character staked the right to select the representatives of any community, including Muslims (of whom Abul Kalam Azad and Abudal Ghaffar Khan presented themselves in Simla in the capacities of the leaders and distinguished members respectively, of the Congress delegation), as the Congress nominees to the council. The league objected to the Congress stand, and claimed an absolute jurisdiction for choosing all the Muslim members of the Council. Not satisfied with this, the League further demanded a communal veto by asking for a two-third majority in the proposed Council, instead of a simple one, on any decision opposed by the Muslim members (or its own nominees) and related to the Muslim interest. In his anxiety for encouraging the League's intransigent posture, and brushing aside the Congress offer to join the Council by keeping it open for the League to step in later, the Viceroy, Wavell, abruptly decided to abandon the British proposals and dissolve the Simla Conference. Judging by the subsequent development, his action implied not only an official recognition of the League's monopoly to speak for all Muslims, and thereby inflated its stature in the Muslim eyes, but he also seemed to have conceded to the League in substance the power to negate any future negotiation that did not suit its own convenience. thereafter, the satisfaction of the League became a pre-requisite to any major settlement.

13.2.2 The Labour in Power

Following a massive victory in the general elections, the British Labour Party came into power in Britain in July 1945 and raised thereby hopes for an early settlement of the Indian question. Known for their sympathies with the nationalist cause in India, the Labour leaders had already committed themselves to freeing India, if and when they were voted to power. As early as 24th June 1938, in fact, the Labour Party leaders (including Clement Attlee, Bevan, Stafford Cripps and Harold Laski) met Jawaharlal Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon near London and agreed – in the case of their forming a Government in Britain – to accept the future constitution of India as decided by an Indian Constituent Assembly, elected on "universal suffrage". They had also agreed to grant India freedom by transferring authority from the

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British to the Indian hands. Despite un-equivocal support of the Labour Party to the issue of Indian independence and its complete electoral victory, its position was hardly different when it came to practical realities of imperial interests.

Consistent with the tenor of its overall approach, the first moves that the Attlee Government made in India were hardly path-breaking or which a non-Labour Government could not make. It asked the Viceroy to announce on 21st August 1945, the holding of new elections for the Indian Legislatures in the approaching winter of 1945-46. The elections were not only overdue for the centre (last elected in 1934), as well as for the provinces (last elected in 1937), but also essential for reopening the constitutional game - the wrangles and squabbles in the name of negotiations. Viceroy was prompted further to renew on 19th September l945 the promises of "early full self government" for India (refusing carefully to use the term "independence"), discussions with the elected legislators and the representatives of the Indian princes on the formation of a Constituent Assembly for undertaking fresh constitutional arrangements (by-passing conveniently the previous Labourite assurance to elect a Constituent Assembly on "universal suffrage") and efforts to be made once again for setting up the Viceroy's Executive Council with nominees from the main Indian Parties.

13.3 ELECTIONS AND THE CABINET MISSION PLAN

The elections were duly held in the winter of 1945-46. In these elections, Congress won overwhelmingly in the General (non-Muslim) constituencies, securing 91.3 per cent votes, winning 57 out of 102 seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and obtaining majorities in all the provinces except Sind, Punjab and Bengal. Apparently League also attained remarkable successes by polling 86.6 per cent of the Muslim votes, winning all the 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and grabbing 442 out of 509 Muslim seats in the provinces. But despite all its achievement, the League could not win all Muslim-majority provinces for which it was demanding for Pakistan. The League ministries were set up in Bengal and Sind. Once the main parties emerged from the limited elections in their strength, as anticipated more or less by the British, the Attlee Government lost no time in commencing negotiations with them. A high-powered mission of three British cabinet members (Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India; Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade; and A.V. Alexander, First Lord of Admiralty) was sent to India to find out ways and means of a negotiated, peaceful transfer of power in India.

The Cabinet Mission, therefore, arrived in India to wrest the initiative. Aided by the Viceroy, it held discussion with the Indian leaders till June 1946 for setting the constitutional future of India, and for deciding upon an interim Indian Government. Following a series of long-drawn deliberations with the Indian leaders of kinds, which had often run into stalemates on account of Jinnah's brinkmanship over Pakistan and the Muslim right of self determination, the Mission eventually came up with a complicated, but somewhat plausible plan for wriggling out of the Indian impasse. (For details of Congress-League confrontations over Cabinet Mission Plan and subsequent communal carnage of 1946 see Sections 12.8 and 12.9 of Unit 12).

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Check Your Progress 1

1) Briefly Discuss Cabinet Mission Plan.

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2) What was the impact of the victory of the Labour Party in England, on the Indian political situation? Write in five lines.

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13.4 CONSTITUTION FRAMING AND THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The demand for framing a constitution for India was really an assertion of self-determination. The Constitution was seen as the source of sovereignty and the rights of the people of India. The British imperial practice has no tradition of a written constitution over and above the ordinary law. Rights of the British subjects are derived from royal grants, parliamentary statutes and the common law. The piecemeal reforms introduced by the British failed to satisfy the aspirations of the people. In its Nagpur session in 1920, the Congress adopted the goal of swaraj. It became the considered policy of the leaders of the movement not to participate in any reform efforts of the colonial rulers.

13.4.1 Various Efforts to Draft a Constitution

The appointment in 1928 of the Indian Statutory Commission (Simon Commission) to look into the demands for constitutional reforms was considered demeaning as it did not include an Indian representative. The first effort to draft a constitution was made in 1928 when an All-Parties Conference met in Delhi and appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution for India. The Nehru Committee recommended a set of fundamental rights which could not be withdrawn by the government.

In May 1934, a section of the Indian National Congress revived the Swaraj Party and demanded a Constituent Assembly containing "representatives of all sections of the Indian people". The task of this Constituent Assembly would be to frame an acceptable Constitution as the only means by which the principle of self-determination of India could be applied. The Government of India Act, 1935, which was the outcome of the Statutory Commission Report and the deliberations of the Round Table Conferences in London, did not meet the demands of rights for the Indian people. In its Lucknow session in 1936, the Congress declared that the aspirations of the people of India will not be satisfied by a constitution imposed by outsiders. It asserted that the 1935 Act curtailed the sovereignty of the people and did not recognize their right to shape and control their political and economic future.

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Increasing demands by Indians for a greater say in their own governance led to the acknowledgement by the Viceroy in August 1940, that the framing of the Constitution for India would be 'primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves'. But this exercise, he said, had to wait till the war was over. The Cripps mission also proposed the setting up of a Constituent Assembly after the war.

13.4.2 Formation of Constituent Assembly, Election and the Objectives Resolution

The Cabinet Mission visited India in March 1946 and sought to make 'immediate arrangements' for Indians to decide the future constitution of India in which all such conflicts could be resolved. The Cabinet Mission Plan, issued in May 1946, offered the opportunity to Indians to make a Constituent Assembly for that purpose.

The Cabinet Mission had suggested the setting up of an Advisory Committee on the 'rights of citizens, minorities and tribal and excluded areas'. Its task would be to draw a list of fundamental rights, the clauses for the protection of minorities and a scheme for the administration of the tribal and excluded areas. So, the Constituent Assembly set up an Advisory Committee with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as the chairman. The Advisory Committee, in turn, set up many sub-committees. In the 'Objectives Resolution' of the Constituent Assembly which is also reflected in the Preamble of the Constitution of India, the Constituent Assembly declared its resolve to constitute India into a sovereign republic. The sovereignty of the Constitution would be derived from the people, who would secure justice, equality and freedom. The Objectives Resolution showed its commitment to democratic ideals by declaring that adequate safeguards would be provided for the rights of minorities, backward and tribal areas, and the depressed and other backward classes.

The normative features of the Indian political system were codified by the Constituent Assembly. The Indian National Congress wanted the establishment of a Constituent Assembly, preferably elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The actual Constituent Assembly, which framed the Indian constitution, was the creation of the Cabinet Mission (March 1946) Plan. The newly elected legislative assemblies of the provinces on the basis of Government of India Act (1935) elected the members of the Constituent Assembly on the basis of one representative for roughly one million people. The Sikh and Muslim legislators elected their own separate delegates on the basis of their respective population. The British plan was to limit the scope of the Constituent Assembly and keep it divided and not to give it sovereign status. The Congress tried to give it a more representative status and 30 delegates were elected from various social groups who were not even the members of Congress party. The Muslim League delegates did not co-operate in its functioning and eventually withdrew from it after the partition.

After the Congress emphasised the need for making of a Constitution of India by their own Constituency, the British reluctantly realized the urgency for establishment of the Constituent Assembly of India for Indians in the changed political situation following the Second World War and change

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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. 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. Under the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946, elections were held for the first time for the Constituent Assembly. The members of the Constituent Assembly were elected by the provincial assemblies by a single, transferable-vote system of proportional representation. The total membership of the Constituent Assembly was 389 of which 292 were representatives of the states, 93 represented the princely states and four were from the chief commissioner provinces of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara, Coorg and British Baluchistan. 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.

13.4.3 Composition, Purpose and Working of Constituent Assembly's

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.). attempts were made to represent all shades of opinion in the Assembly. Majority of the Constituent Assembly members belonged to the Congress. But it also included non-

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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 there 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.

13.4.4 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 as mentioned earlier. In this meeting, J.B. Kripalani requested Dr. Sachchidanand to

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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 seven-member Committee was constituted to examine the draft. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was the 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 finalized 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.

13.5 THE RESIDUE OF COLONIAL PATTERN OF POWER AND THE POST-INDEPENDENT POLITY

The state in which the nationalist forces represented by the Indian National Congress played a key role inherited many features of the administrative and institutional structures of the colonial past. The constitution of India, itself was a product of British constitutional arrangement for India. After India became independent, the constitution-drafting body became fully sovereign. Although, the constituent Assembly adopted many of the democratic and normative forms that the nationalist leaders had been espousing during colonial rule, the basic constitutional framework comprized of a strong unitary centre, with limited devolution of power to provinces. The centralising polity of colonial period, despite some changes, was thus retained. The impact of the Imperial polity found expression in the continuation of the elite cadre of Indian Civil Service. Although the question of bureaucracy's responsibility or regular reporting and control by elective, non-bureaucratic political institutions required certain basic changes in its functioning and orientation, many features of colonial period

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were retained. We also find continuation of imperial legacy in its functional orientation, i.e., giving primacy to law and order. In other aspects gradual changes in their functions as public servants, along with new responsibility like conducting elections and taking developmental initiatives as the heads of public enterprises, eroded its earlier exclusive and cohesive character. The structure and role of military and para-military forces also reflected the colonial legacy. The professional character of army insulated from the civil society was preserved. The lower officers were mostly drawn from the ranks of landed peasants which was a continuation of colonial policy. The colonial belief in martial races was reflected in the recruitment policy and regiments though initially divided on caste, ethic and community basis later included mixed caste and ethnic groups. The process of partial transfer of power during 1920s and 1930s established by procedures by which the bureaucracy could by passed the elected political leaders. These procedures were further elaborated by creating a space where bureaucracy could deal with 'public matters' outside elected institutions. The military-bureaucratic machinery retained its relative autonomy and its mediatory role between elective institutions and public. The state in the post-colonial situation also appropriated a very large part of economic surplus and deployed it through bureaucracy in promoting development. The power and status of new bureaucratic-managerial elite also grew manifold with the growth of non-market mechanisms in the allocation of resources through arbitrary distribution of patronage in the forms of licenses, permits and governmental sanctions. India also inherited many other institutional features of colonial regime such as educational set-up, legal and judicial arrangements. The new state also continued the pattern of infrastructure development within which it was to carry out the gradual process of transition from above, renouncing its earlier slogans of social justice, which were used to mobilise people against the colonial rulers.

13.6 THE IMPACT OF THE NATIONALIST LEGACY ON POST-INDEPENDENT POLITY

It was reflected in adoption of the leading ideas of nationalist leaders such as sovereignty of Indian state and a unitary state to achieve balanced economic growth and planned industrialization. They favoured parliamentary institutions and economic self-sufficiency for India so that it may play a vital role in non-aligned movement. They also emphasised the need to achieve socio-economic reforms. Many of the institutional structures bore the imprints of these ideals and values. For instance, the nationalist movement popularised democratic ideals and institutions from the very beginning and opposed laws that restricted civil liberties during the colonial period. They were demanding representation of Indian people through adult franchise. They defended the freedom of press and speech against repressive colonial laws. The Congress organization was also based on democratic pattern, with the right of dissent and expression given due place in its functioning. The nationalist leadership popularised the basic norms of popular sovereignty, representative government and civil liberties, and it attempted to integrate this political ethos with the ideas of postcolonial polity.

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13.7 INSTITUTIONAL PILLARS OF THE DEMOCRATIC STATE

The leading ideas advocated by nationalists after Independence such as popular sovereignty, secularism, democracy and parliamentarianism provided the basic normative and institutional framework of the state that emerged after 15 August, 1947 in India. These ideas provided legitimacy to the post-colonial polity especially because this polity was to be operative in a fragmented and culturally heterogeneous society. However, many institutions and practices borrowed from the West European model or Westminster form of parliamentary democracy were adopted and moulded to suit indigenous needs. The nation to which the British transferred power in 1947 was an end product of specific political ideas of 1930s and 1940s. The Congress organization was based on elective principle. The adoption of parliamentary and accountable government was not a pure imitation of British Parliament; it was rather a formalising of nationalist-organizational practices. Similarly, precursors of many constitutional ideas such as adult franchise without any qualification (of property or literacy), fundamental rights and a charter of socio-economic programme in the form of the Directive Principles of state policy can be traced to the pre-independence political idioms and slogans of Congress. Though the Indian constitution of 1950 borrowed heavily from the Government of India Act (1935) and retained a quasi-federal structure inclining towards centralization of powers, it removed the constraints inherent in the colonial framework. The allocation of power between the centre and states, between the executive and judiciary was designed to protect citizens from arbitrary exercise of power by those wielding it. This was further ensured by introducing the American model of a Supreme Court with right of judicial review. However, certain unrepresentative (bureaucratic machinery) and undemocratic provisions including Emergency provisions were retained. The developmental ideology of welfare was an important feature of the postcolonial state and formed its integral part. The Fundamental Rights incorporated in Article 12 to 35 of the constitution, accord a guarantee against encroachments by the state on the civic and human rights of individuals as well as religious minorities. There are seven Fundamental rights: the right to equality, the right to 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. The Directive Principles are a set of guidelines or instructions to the state to introduce certain basic socio-economic reforms to make the Fundamental rights more effective. Though there is no legal sanction behind the enforcement of these policy measures, they reflect the basic welfare-oriented norms of the Indian political system. After independence, India made secularism the foundation of its constitution, state and society. Secularism was defined as the separation of religion from politics and state, confining religion to the private sphere of individual citizen, state neutrality towards all religions and absence of discrimination on the ground of religion.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Describe briefly, the formation, composition and functioning of Constituent Assembly.

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2) Discuss how the Colonial and the nationalist legacy influenced the shape of the post Colonial Indian Polity.

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3) What were the main features of the post Colonial Indian State?

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13.8 LET US SUM UP

After The World War-II and Quit India movement, it was becoming clear that British rule is going to end soon. But it took a prolonged and negotiated settlement for transfer of power to Indian people. For decades Indian nationalists had resisted the British colonial power and tried to counter its hegemony. Nationalists used certain ideological and cultural markers to develop the conception of the Indian nation. The British contended that India was not a nation and would never become one because its people were divided along caste and community lines. The Muslim League leaders were too engrossed in playing the power-game, as conducted by the British. It was left only to the nationalists, especially those who had sworn all their lives by mass mobilization and a united India, to take note of the possibilities that the turbulent days offered. However, given to despair, and therefore, to anxiety for a negotiated settlement, even if it meant a religiously based partition of Indian, they had neither the energy nor the determination to prepare for a titanic struggle. Consequently, the Congress decided to ignore most of the popular outbursts of 1945-47, and was obsessed for a peaceful transfer of power. The retreat of colonial power was only a partial success as the Imperial power succeeded in dividing the sub-continent according to its own design. The partition also ensured that the institutional patterns created by the colonial power remained intact. The transfer of power to the Congress and Muslim League in two parts of the sub-continent also silenced the radical voices regarding the post-colonial political scenario.

13.9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 13.3

2) See Sub-section 13.2.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 13.4

2) See Sections 13.5 and 13.6

3) See Section 13.7

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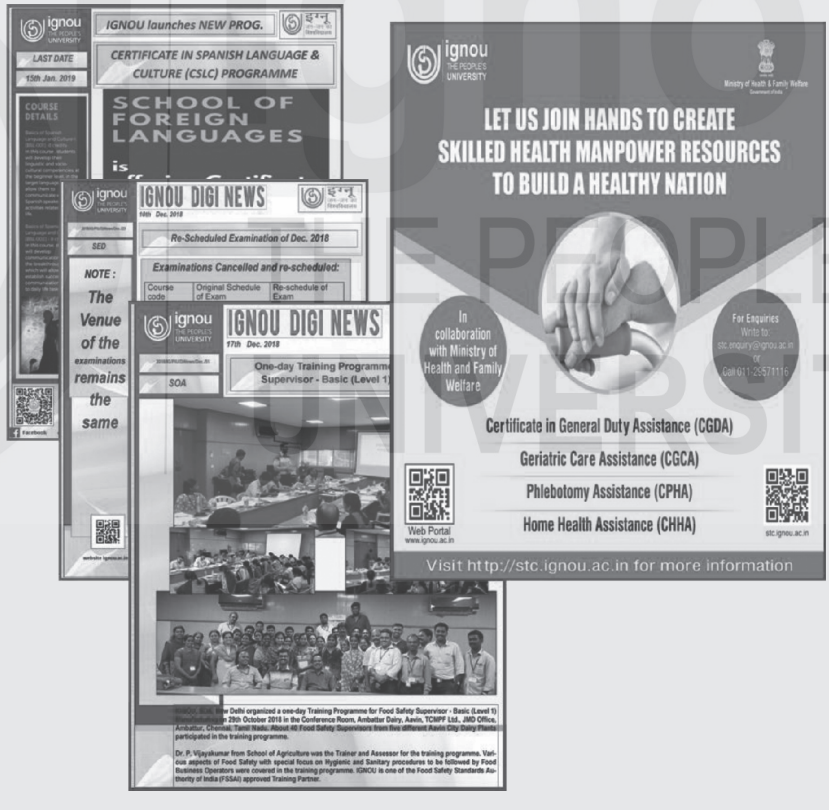

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