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**M.A. PART - I**  
**POLITICAL SCIENCE**  
**SUB-GROUP - E - INDIAN STUDIES**  
**PAPER II**  
**MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

**Dr. Sanjay Deshmukh**

Vice Chancellor,  
University of Mumbai

**Dr. Ambuja Salgaonkar**

Incharge Director,  
Institute of Distance and  
Open Learning,  
University of Mumbai.

**Dr. Dhaneswar Harichandan**

Incharge Study Material,  
Institute of Distance and  
Open Learning,  
University of Mumbai.

**Programme Co-ordinator :** **Shri Anil Bankar**  
Asst.Prof. Cum Asst Director  
IDOL, University Of Mumbai

**Course Co-ordinator :** **Dr. Surendra Jondhale**  
Head, Department of Civics & Politics  
University Of Mumbai  
Mumbai - 400098

**Editor & Course Writer** 1) **Dr. Chhaya Bakane,**  
Principal, R. J. Thakur College  
Thane (W)

**Course Writer** 2) **Prof . S. Zaheer Ali**  
Department of Civics & Politics  
University Of Mumbai  
Mumbai - 400098

3) **Dr. M. Murlidhara,**  
Behind Barrach, 1081,  
O.T. Section, Ashok Nagar  
Ulhasnagar

4) **Prof S. P. Buwa**  
T. K Tope Night College, Parel,  
Mumbai-400012

**Reprint October, 2015 – M.A. PART - I, Political Science-Sub-Group - E-  
Indian Studies Paper – II Modern Indian Political Thought**

Published by : Incharge Director  
Institute of Distance and Open Learning ,  
University of Mumbai,  
Vidyanagari, Mumbai - 400 098.

DTP Composed : Gaokar's Laser Point  
Borivali (W), Mumbai -400 092.

Printed by : Uchitha Graphic Printers Pvt. Ltd.  
65, Ideal Industrial Estate, S. B. Marg, Lower Parel,  
Mumbai - 400 013., www.uchitha.com

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## Syllabus

# M.A. PART - I

## Political Science

### Sub-Group - E- Indian studies Paper – II

## Modern Indian Political Thought,

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2. Equality: Mahatma Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.
3. Liberalism: Justice M.G. Ranade, G.K. Gokhale.
4. Extremist Nationalism: Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sri Aurobindo.
5. Truth and non-violence: Mahatma Gandhi.
6. Sarvodaya: Vinoba Bhave and Jay Prakash Narain.
7. Communalism: Hindu, Muslim and Sikh.
8. Socialist and Communist Thought: Ram Manohar Lohia, Acharya Narayan Dev, R.P. Dutt.
9. New Humanism: M.N. Roy.

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# 1

## **The Indian Renaissance- Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda**

### **Unit Structure**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Renaissance
- 1.2 Indian Renaissance
- 1.3 The National movement
- 1.4 The Brahmo Samaj
- 1.5 The Prarthana Samaj
- 1.6 The Satya Shodhak Samaj
- 1.7 Arya Samaj
- 1.8 Ram Krishna Mission
- 1.9 Theosophical Society
- 1.10 Raja Ram Mohan Roy
- 1.11 Swami Vivekananda
- 1.12 Questions
- 1.13 References

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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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This paper covers the various dominant trends of thought prevalent in India during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. 19<sup>th</sup> century was the century of stalwarts in the political, social and economic field. One after another leaders emerged from all provinces of India and from all walks of life. They tried hard to develop their own solutions to the contemporary issues. They built organisations and institutions. This paper briefly introduces you to this scenario.

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## 1.1 RENAISSANCE

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Renaissance marked the end of the feudal period or the dark ages. The period between 5<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century A. D. is known as the feudal period or the dark ages. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has aptly described the feudal period in his book *The Glimpses of World History*:-

“After the downfall of Rome the old order had collapsed. There was disorder and anarchy and violence and force everywhere. The strong seized what they could and held on to it as long as a stronger person did not come to throw them out. Strong castles were built and the lords of these castles went out with raiding parties and harried the countryside, and sometimes fought others like themselves. The poor peasants and workers on the land of course suffered the most. Out of this disorder grew up the feudal system”.

Famous artist Leonardo Da Vinci’s description of coarse men aptly describes the feudal lords:-

“Coarse people of bad habits and shallow judgments do not deserve so beautiful and instrument, such a complex anatomical equipment, as the human body. They should merely have a sack for taking in food and letting it out again, for they are nothing but an alimentary canal!”

The Renaissance movement challenged the feudal system. It was a system where the serfs were considered equal to animals. The feudal lords exploited them and the Church protected the interests of the feudal lords.

Renaissance is a western concept. The French term renaissance means rebirth. European renaissance in 15<sup>th</sup> century signifies the rebirth of humanity. It started in Florence in 1498 and was a spontaneous moment of the people. It brought about changes in almost all fields of Human Endeavour such as art, literature, technology. Science forged ahead. The Church was demystified; there was a revolt against the Church. People started thinking independently and making experiments.

Printing technology drastically changed the world. Copies of Bible were easily available. Many people learned to read and write. The more people read, the more they thought. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru says “And the more one thinks the more one begins to examine existing conditions and to criticise them. And this often leads to a challenge of the existing order. Ignorance is always afraid of change.

It fears the unknown and sticks to its rut, however miserable it may be there. But with right reading comes a measure of knowledge, and the eyes are partly opened.”

### **Check Your Progress**

- 1) Explain the Concept of Renaissance
- 2) Explain the Feudal System

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## **1.2 INDIAN RENAISSANCE**

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In India the renaissance started after the advent of the British Raj. The British rulers brought about many changes in India. They constructed railway routes across India to facilitate the movement of their armed forces. But the railway routes gradually changed the economy and overall culture of the regions.

For the first time in history all parts of India were united and brought under one rule. This of course helped to foster a feeling of unity among the inhabitants of the erstwhile separated territories. Postal services were started. Nationwide communication and telecommunication links were established.

Production of Tea and Coffee was started on the commercial scale. Cotton and Jute mills were started. Coal mining was started

Military regiments like the Mahar regiment, Maratha light infantry, Gorkha regiments were established. Because of these regiments the downtrodden people of India got a chance to develop and evolve. Their economic conditions improved and as a result they started challenging and fighting for better social and political position.

The British introduced English education. A new generation of Indians, who had read about the American and the French revolution and the liberal ideology of the west, emerged. The Brahmins were at the forefront in seeking English education and University degrees. They also occupied many posts in the administration. A new generation of reformers emerged out of these new university graduates. M. G. Ranade, K. T. Telang, R. G. Bhandarkar were some of the prominent personalities of this generation.

Many news papers were started in English and regional languages. Darpan, Prabhakar, Bangla Gazette were some of the regional language newspapers where as Dnyanprakash, Calcutta Journal were some of the English newspapers. By 1859 more than 500 news papers were published from all over India.

Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1815-1846) who owned the first Marathi language news paper 'Darpan', Krishna Shastri Chiplunkar (1824-1878), Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar (1850-1882) Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823-1892) famous for his 'Shatapatre' were some of the prominent reformers from Maharashtra.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Briefly discuss the developments during Indian Renaissance

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## **1.3 THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

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The revolt of 1857 can be considered as the starting point of the nationalist movement in India. It was basically a revolt of the existing princely states against the East India Company.

The establishment of the Indian National Congress was another mile stone in the development of the nationalist movement. A. O. Hume a British officer took the initiative in establishing the Congress. It was an organisation of the moderates. It made some appeals to the British government for reforms in the Indian society.

In 1907 the Indian National Congress split into two factions – the extremists and the moderates. Further in 1920 Mahatma Gandhi drastically changed the Congress organisation.

The revolutionaries, the socialists, the communists were the different trends in the national movement.

### **Social reforms**

Some of the youngsters adopted Christianity because of the influence of the British administration, English education, English newspapers, and books. But many chose the way of reforming their own society. Thus began the era of reforms in Hindu, Muslim and

Parsi religions and the caste system. Many new organisations were formed. Following is the brief summary of few of those organisations.

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## **1.4 THE BRAHMO SAMAJ**

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The Brahma Samaj was established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy at Calcutta in 1828. It was very much influenced by the principles of Christian religion. The Brahma samajists didn't believe in idol worship. They also denied the stratification of the society on the basis of caste. They criticised untouchability, child marriage, trafficking among women, the practice of sati. They encouraged inter-caste marriages and widow remarriages. Dr. D. K. Bedekar succinctly describes the work of the Brahma Samaj in following terms – “The Brahma Samaj tried to replace the old man bound by customs and traditions by a new man thinking creatively and acting accordingly.”

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## **1.5 THE PRARTHANA SAMAJ**

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The Prarthana samaj was established by Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, Dadoba Pandurang and Bhaskar Pandurang in Mumbai in 1867. Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade later contributed most to the activities of the Samaj. It was almost a replica of the Brahma Samaj formed in Bengal. A magazine, Subodh Patrika was published by the Samaj. Reforming the Hindu religion was their main task. They established many hostels for widows, and people belonging to downtrodden castes, night schools etc.

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## **1.6 THE SATYA SHODHAK SAMAJ**

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The Satya Shodhak Samaj was established by Mahatma Jyotiba Phule in 1873 in Maharashtra. The main aim of the Samaj was to find the truth behind unjust and unequal social organisation. It revolted against the caste system. Enlightenment and empowerment of the exploited lower castes was the main aim of the Samaj. Mahatma Phule was instrumental in mobilising the masses against the established elites. But he was very well aware of the fact that his struggle was not against Brahmins per se but the brahminical tendencies of:-

1. Maintaining a monopoly over all sorts of knowledge,
2. Mediating or acting as an agent between the common man and the God and
3. Pursuing an attitude of inequality.

Phule wanted to destroy the caste system as a whole. He also provided alternatives to the society. He has attempted to build an alternative culture. He elaborately deals with all these issues in his book 'Satya Dharma Pustak'. For God his alternative is the Nirmik, for the popular Abhanga (devotional songs written by saints – particularly Saint Tukaram) his alternative is the Akhanda, and he replaces the Hindu dharma with the Satya Dharma. Many people from the non-Brahmin community benefited from this movement. They started their own newspapers, published books, established schools and other social institutions, established their own political parties and bravely fought against the dominance of the upper castes.

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## **1.7 ARYA SAMAJ**

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It was established in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in Punjab. Satyarth Prakash was the mouthpiece of their organisation. It believed in the Vedas but refused to believe in the caste system. For them all Hindus were a non stratified community. It believed in monotheism (belief in a single God). It believes in human efforts rather than destiny and advices to work hard to achieve success instead leaving things to destiny. Through the Shuddhi movement the Samaj also tried to bring back people who were converted to other religions into the Hindu fold.

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## **1.8 RAM KRISHNA MISSION**

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The disciples of Ram Krishna Parmahans established the Ram Krishna Mission in Bengal. Swami Vivekananda played the leading role. He was inspired by the philosophy of the Upanishads or the Vedanta. The mission is still active and runs many orphanages, destitute homes, hospitals, schools, hostels, libraries all over the world. In the pre-independent period they mainly worked for rebuilding the lost confidence of the Indian masses.

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## 1.9 THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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Madam Blavatsky, a Russian intellectual and an American Colonel Henry Steel Olcott established theosophical society in New York. Their basic aim was to study Yoga and other Indian traditions. A branch of the society was established in 1879 in Mumbai. Annie Besant also worked for this institution. The society also established schools and colleges. It established the Central Hindu College at Banaras which is now the Banaras Hindu University.

On the contrary the Parsi community contributed a lot to the renaissance, the economic development and the nationalist movement. They contributed to the all round development of Mumbai City. They built many schools, colleges, universities, art galleries. They also published many newspapers such as the Bombay Samachar, Mumbai Vartaman, Jam-e-Jamshed etc.

### Check your progress

1. Explain the concept of Renaissance

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2. Explain the contributions of various social reform organisations to the Indian Renaissance.

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## 1.10 RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY (1772-1833 – 61 YEARS)

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Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a thorough rational and philosophy was his basic interest. He developed his world view on the basis of rationalism. He studied almost all religions of the world.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born in Radhanagar village of Hugli district of Bengal province. The original family surname was Banerjee. Roy was the title awarded by the British government to his grandfather for best administrative service. People started calling them Roy and gradually Roy became their surname. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's father was a strictly religious Vaishnav. His mother belonged to the Shakt sect of Hindu religion.

Ram Mohan completed his primary education in the Gurukool. He learnt Farsi from a Maulavi. He learnt about Islam and the Arabic language at Patna. He was very much impressed by the monotheism and some other good principles of Islam. He started criticising Hindu traditions. His father asked him to leave home.

He went to Tibet. Criticised the idol worship practices of Lamas and again became a target. From there he returned to Varanasi, meticulously studied the Hindu philosophy and decided to purify the Hindu religion. He fought a war against the feudal tendencies in Hindu religion throughout his life.

He had done a comparative study of all religions. He was a very good orator. He delivered lectures mainly on topics related to religion. He published a Farsi language magazine named Mirat-ul-Akhbar and a Bengali magazine Samvad Kaumudi.

He wrote his book Taufat-ul-Muahideen (A gift to those who believe in monotheism). In the introduction to this book he says he found that amongst the numerous religions and their innumerable followers there is one thing in common and that is their belief in one supernatural power. He argues that therefore there should be one universal religion.

He worked in the East India Company at Rangapur. There he learnt about Jainism. He left the East India Company job after a brief period of service.

He established the Atmiya Sabha in 1815. He criticised the practice of trafficking among girls and the caste system. In 1821 he established the Calcutta Unitarian Association.

From 1818 he started his famous struggle against the horrible practice of Sati.



He learned Hebrew, Greek, Latin and English languages and studied Christianity.

He wrote an article named “The Precepts of Jesus: The guide to happiness” and criticised the unworthy and unscientific parts of the Bible. Many Christians in India criticised him for this work. But his ideas were welcomed in UK and USA. These people understood the real motives of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

He wanted to create a universal religion by the method of consensus. He wanted to unify all good principles from all religions and formulate one universal religion.

The temple constructed by the Brahma samaj didn't have any idol. It was open to all irrespective of their religion and they were allowed to worship God in their own way. The main aim behind this was to make it possible to people of all religion to come together and exchanged their views, discuss and sort out the problems.

In 1830 he went to England and presented a statement from the Badshah of Delhi to the British crown. The title Raja was given to him by the Mughal Badshah of Delhi.

He never supported monarchy. He always supported democracy and democratic movements all over the world.

From England he went to France. While returning he died in Bristol, England in 1833.

### **Check your progress**

1. Write a brief biography of Raja Ram Mohan Ray.

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2. Discuss Raja Ram Mohan Ray's ideas about liberty.

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### 1.10.1 Principle of Liberty

He always supported liberty.

1. When the Spanish colonies in South America were liberated in 1823 he organised a party to celebrate the occasion at the town hall in Calcutta.
2. He supported the Greeks to fight against the Turks.
3. He demanded freedom to Ireland.
4. He supported the reform act (1832) of the British parliament.

He congratulated the people of Naples on successfully revolting against the Bourbon King. Roy supported freedom movements all over the world but never demanded freedom for India. He never participated in the freedom movement of India. He never initiated that kind of a movement because he was very well aware of the ground realities in India. He was of the opinion that Indians don't have the vibrant nationalist qualities. He feared that there will be anarchy and chaos if the British left India immediately. He firmly believed that the British will make India a free country when Indians will meet all the conditions of eligibility. But he was aware of the fact that this will take a long time. Indians will take a long time to develop.

He favoured the freedom of expression and particularly the freedom of press. According to Roy if the press highlights the limitations of the government the government must positively respond to the criticism in press by making the required corrections in the system. In any case the freedom of press must not be stifled.

He favoured the right to life and property of every individual but he was not an individualist in the western sense. He also favoured the interference of the government in social, economic and political matters in order to maintain equality and social justice.

His opposition to Sati is well known to all of us. He pressurised the British government to make a law banning Sati. Governor Lord Bentick made first such law in the Bengal Presidency, later it was applied to all provinces of India. He favoured widow remarriage and was against child marriages. He opposed polygamy – a man marrying many women.

### 1.10.2 Why India lost freedom?

According to Roy India lost freedom because of the following reasons:-

1. Conflicts between different princely states
2. Incompetence of local rulers
3. Lack of knowledge of advanced combat methods and strategic techniques.
4. lack of scientific development
5. absence of feeling of nationalism among the people
6. Excesses of religion
7. Caste system - The Hindu society is divided into castes. People belonging to various castes are deeply engrossed in rites and rituals. They are not aware about their political rights and economic development. It is very difficult to pull them out of their situation and make them aware of the modern world and its challenges.

#### His perception about the British Raj

He believed that the British Crown is a just authority. It will always act for the benefit of the Indians. But their administrators in India are corrupt and narrow minded. Therefore the ultimate control should rest in the hands of the British parliament and the crown.

Roy was often criticised for supporting the British government. But he never favoured the British government blindly. He always supported the policies of the British government on a practical basis and always criticised the British government for draining India economically. He had made a suggestion that the Europeans shall be compelled to stay in India. This will help in securing our wealth. He favoured the British government because:

1. They established the rule of law in India for the first time
2. They also established equality before law.
3. they provided certain freedoms to Indians (though with a very limited scope)
4. They provided them access to newspapers.
5. They provided access to the western philosophy.
6. They provided civil rights to the citizens

Roy suggests that the British government should concentrate on the development of the Indian people otherwise the credit they have gained by providing all the above mentioned facilities will be lost because of the backwardness of the society. He never favoured revolution as a way towards freedom.

He criticised the Christian missionaries for forcibly converting poor Hindus to Christianity with the help of the British government. He was not against professing religion. Every body is free to profess any religion. If somebody wishfully accepts a particular religion based on the suggestions of another person then Roy had no objection to that process.

### **His ideas about law and judiciary**

Administrators promoted to higher posts always have prejudices and misconceptions about the society. These prejudices are the result of their work at the lower levels of administration. When they are promoted to higher posts and have greater authority they carry their prejudices about the society with them. They can't think beyond those limitations. Those limitations reflect in the laws and rules they make and also in their governance. Therefore Roy said that the law making authority should rest in the hands of the British crown and the Parliament and not in the hands of the administrators. Law should always be based on Reason and not on passion.

He has discussed the issue of law at a great length. He was in favour of codification of law – i.e. a written constitution. He was of the opinion that the law of the land should not neglect the customs and traditions of that particular society. In a bid to make the law universal the importance of customs and traditions of a society and the cultural background of the society should not be neglected. On the contrary the law should reflect the culture of the society.

The Jury act passed by the British Parliament in 1826 had a provision that a Hindu or a Muslim person will not be a jury in a case against a Christian person. Roy opposed to this act claiming that this amounts to discrimination based on religion.

He has also dealt with the issue of corruption and other problems in the judicial process. He suggested that cases should be conducted in the native language. The jury must include the local people.

### **Education**

He welcomed English education. He was in favour of providing knowledge about science and technology being developed in the West. He was against imparting religious training in educational institutions. In 1816 he established an English School.

#### **1.10.3 Ideal form of government**

Direct democracy, Unlimited Monarchy and Aristocracy all three systems have their own limitations. In direct democracy there is a possibility of ignorant masses ruling senselessly. Unlimited powers in

the hands of a monarch means dictatorship and in aristocracy there is always a fear of a small minority ruling the whole society arbitrarily. Therefore he preferred constitutional monarchy, a limited monarchy like the British monarchy.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Why Raja Ram Mohan Roy is considered as the first modern Indian political thinker?

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2. Explain Raja Ram Mohan Roy's ideas about law and religion.

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3. Explain Raja Ram Mohan Roy's ideas about liberty.

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4. Why Raja Ram Mohan Roy supported the British rule in India?

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5. Why India lost freedom according to Raja Ram Mohan Roy?  
Swami Vivekananda (Narendranath Vishwanath Dutta)

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## **1.11 SWAMI VIVEKANANDA (1863-1902 – 39 YEARS) NARENDRA VISHWANATH DUTTA**

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Swami Vivekananda was a magnetic personality deeply influenced by Ram Krishna Paramahans, still impressing generations in India and the world over even after more than 100 years of his death. An aura surrounded him for most part of his short lived, but splendid and fabulous life.

Swami Vivekananda never joined a political party, he was not part of the government or the administration, police or the military, he was neither a worker in the factory nor a farmer, he was a simple monk wearing saffron coloured clothes he never joined a revolutionary organisation. But still he became popular and influential. He influenced the ideas of Yogi Arvind, Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. Many revolutionaries took inspiration from his ideas.

### **1.11.1 Childhood and College days**

Narendranath (his original name) was born and brought up in a Bengali middle class family. One of his famous biographers Romain Rolland emphasises his Kshatriya descent. He received normal primary education in the local English school. He was a voracious reader and developed a critical and analytical attitude towards the world and knowledge.

His father was an Attorney-at-Law at Kolkata high court. His mother also had a versatile personality. She also had a magnificent family background. Swami Vivekananda always credited his mother for all the good qualities he had. He says "I am indebted to my mother for the efflorescence of my knowledge."

During his childhood Narendra lived a life of a prince. He was gifted with extraordinary intellectual powers; he was a brilliant chap while in school. His Principal once predicted that this boy will definitely establish his own identity.

During his College years he thoroughly studied the philosophy of Spencer, Kant, Hegel, James Mill and John Stuart Mill etc. Swami Vivekananda studied the philosophy of the Brahmo Samaj. But he soon found its aims superficial. He read Hume, Herbert Spencer, and

John Stuart Mill and began to call himself an agnostic. He refused to marry as he felt that he should remain chaste and unattached so as to devote himself to a great cause.

In 1884 after the death of his father he experienced poverty. He searched for a job but didn't get one. He realised that poor people have no place in this world.

### **1.11.2 Meeting with Ramakrishna Parmahans**

An accidental meeting with Ramakrishna proved to be a turning point in Narendra's life. In 1881 at the age of 18 years he met Ramakrishna Parmahans at the Dakshineswar Temple a few miles away from Calcutta.

He was intrigued and puzzled by Ramkrishna's personality. Ramakrishna was a rustic man. He spoke with a slight stammer and sometimes used harsh words in the dialect of his native Bengal village.

Ramakrishna was in search of man who could propagate his ideas all over the world, who has the compassion to deal with the problems of humanity, who could organise and influence a group of followers – Narendra was the man who was able to do all these things.

Ramakrishna Paramahans had a great impact on his life. Ramakrishna transformed Narendra into Swami Vivekananda. Narendra had a critical attitude about spiritualism and supernatural powers. The process of transformation of intellectual and rational Narendra into a spiritual Swami was very painful. But gradually he understood everything that his Guru Ramakrishna was preaching and changed himself. Later he requested Ramakrishna to have the experience of Samadhi. Ramakrishna denied him Samadhi and asked him to serve the people.

Ramakrishna said "You have a great work to do; you are going to be my instrument and my messenger to the world. If you enter Samadhi you will not be able to come back, and the great work will suffer. What I have known has to reach to every nook and corner of the earth. Don't be selfish; give up your attachments, and don't hanker for your Samadhi. You have to build a huge temple sheltering millions of thirsty seekers from all over the world. That's why I am taking away the key to your Samadhi."

### **1.11.3 Monastery at Baranagore**

After the death of Ramakrishna in 1886, Vivekananda and his friends formed a group and finally decided to continue Ramkrishna's

work forward. They went through many hardships. They formed a monastic brotherhood. He went to the homes of those boys who had resumed their studies, and, by a whirlwind of enthusiasm, tried to induce them to return to Baranagore where the first monastery of the Ramakrishna Order was started.

“Once at the monastery, they could not resist the spiritual impetus of Naren’s songs and thrilling conversations ... The boys were now in the midst of extreme privations... forgetting sleep, they spent night after night in prayer and spiritual exercises... Hours were also consumed in the study of philosophy, both Eastern and Western, to intensify their struggle for the realization of the highest Truth...they practised the severest of spiritual austerities, and the world had no meaning for them at that time. Some time during this period they performed the sacred Viraja ceremony and formally took the vows of lifelong celibacy and poverty, dedicating their lives to the realization of God. The old names were changed for new ones to complete their severance from their earlier life and its associations.”

#### **1.11.4 Wandering alone**

In 1888 he left the monastery and started a yatra “he was determined to break away from the monastery to test his own strength, to gather experiences of a new life, to make himself absolutely fearless, and at the same time to force his brother-disciples to learn self-reliance and to stand alone. He therefore suddenly left Calcutta in 1888 and went to Varanasi, Ayodhya, Lucknow, Agra, Vrindaban, Hathras, and the Himalayas.” Vivekananda acquired the first hand knowledge of India’s hunger and misery through these experiences.

He reached Kanyakumari and had a Sakshatkar. (Realisation) He visualized the aim of his life. He realised that solving the basic problems of poverty, hunger, blind faith, and disease was his main responsibility. Without solving these problems these people will not be able to understand the philosophy.

#### **1.11.5 Problems of India and the solution**

He found a way out of this problem and that was to seek the help of the western developed nations. He was very much aware of their prosperity and development. He considered the spiritual wealth of India as invaluable. What he thought was that India will provide the Vedanta philosophy to the west and in return receive financial and material aid from them.



### **1.11.6 Visit To USA**

He went to USA in 1893 (1893-1896 3.5 years) for the Parliament of the world's religion. He changed his name to Vivekananda. He impressed the conference. All religions should try to understand each other – this was his main message. All other people talked about their own God. Vivekananda spoke about the universal God and universal religion. He advocated consensus among all religions. American newspapers upheld him as the most important man in the conference. He established the Vedanta society in USA. On his way back he delivered some lectures in England. He returned back to India in 1896.

### **1.11.7 About the Indian National Congress**

Vivekananda was neither a political thinker nor a politician. Religion and spiritualism was his field. He had warned against political misuse of his ideas. For him the Congress movement was very important. He hoped that if it succeeds unity and equality will be established in India. About joining the Indian National Congress he said he was a Sanyasi and to relate him to any movement which is based on political motives was just impossible.

### **Spiritual personality of India**

According to Vivekananda every nation like a man has its own personality and aims and objectives of the life. Spirituality is India's personality. India should continue to evolve its spiritual power. It should not try to follow the path of the west. India should learn from the west but never forget its own traditions and legacy.

### **Advaita Siddhant – The theory of non-duality**

The Advaita siddhant means there is unity in the Universe. There is no difference between Man and God. Every living thing is an incarnation of God. Every man that is to say the Atman is not different from the Brahma that is God. He stated the ideal of a universal religion. Each soul is potentially divine. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.

He accepted the fact that caste system has weakened the Indian society. It was not the fault of Hindu religion. It was the fault of those people who misinterpreted Hindu religion. In India politics should be understood and taught in the context of religion.

### **1.11.8 About reforming the society**

What Vivekananda thought about reforming the society can be summarised by following quotations:-

“...Anyone who administers medicine to a madman must be ready to be rewarded with kicks and bites; but he is the true friend who forces the medicine down the throats of such and bears with them in patience.”

“Are great things ever done smoothly? Time, patience and indomitable will must show.”

He was very much against fanaticism

“I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.”

“I am a Hindu. I am sitting in my own little well and thinking that the whole world is my little well. The Christian sits in his little well and thinks the whole world is his well. The Mohammedan sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world. I have to thank you of America for the great attempt you are making to break down the barriers of this little world of ours, and hope that, in the future, the Lord will help you to accomplish your purpose.”

### **About Brahmins and the caste system**

“All Brahmins, if the Brahmin has more aptitude for learning on the ground of heredity than the Pariah, spend no more money on the Brahmin’s education, but spend all on the Pariah. Give to the weak, for there all the gift is needed. If the Brahmin is born clever, he can educate himself without help. If the others are not born clever, let them have all the teaching and teachers they want. This is justice and reason as I understand it.

“But the Jatidharma or svdharma as commonly understood at present by the higher caste is rather a new evil which has to be guarded against. They think they knew everything of Jatidharma, but really they know nothing of it. Regarding their own village customs as the eternal customs laid down by the Vedas, and appropriating to themselves all privileges.

He also predicted that the rule of the upper castes is almost over and in the near future the lower castes or the Shudras will rule. A Shudra rule is imminent. For ages the upper castes have dominated and exploited the lower castes. Now the lower caste people are enlightened and very soon they will take over political economic and social power.

**Swami Vivekananda's world famous speech**

Available at <http://www.advaitaashrama.org/cw/content.php>

**RESPONSE TO WELCOME**

*At the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago*

*11th September, 1893*

Sisters and Brothers of America,

It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.

My thanks, also, to some of the speakers on this platform who, referring to the delegates from the Orient, have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honour of bearing to different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation. I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: "Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me." Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisation and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now? But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.

**Briefly narrates the story of the memorial as follows :-**

“Towards the end of 1892, after three years of wandering across the length and breadth of India, a young monk found himself at Kanyakumari, the southernmost point of the country. To quell the questions raging in his mind, he leapt into the sea and swam across shark-infested waters to reach a holy rock in mid-sea—the very last bit of Indian land.

On the rock, he meditated, taking in the whole of India as it were, from that vantage point. At the end of three days and nights, the monk found enlightenment on his life’s mission: to arouse the nation from its dismal slumber of a thousand years of slavery and rediscover its past glory.

Thus was born on that rock, Swami Vivekananda—the spiritual teacher, prophet and patriot-monk of modern India. The rock became doubly blessed.

To honour Swami Vivekananda’s vision, the idea to construct a memorial on that particular rock was mooted on the eve of his birth centenary in 1962.”

## **1.12 QUESTIONS**

1. Briefly discuss Swami Vivekananda's ideas about reforming the Indian society.
2. Discuss Swami Vivekananda's ideas about caste system.
3. Explain the influence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa on Swami Vivekananda.
4. Discuss the contribution of Swami Vivekananda to modern Indian Political thought.

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<sup>i</sup> from French *renaissance*, from *re-* 'back, again' + *naissance* 'birth' (from Latin *nascentia*, from *nasci* 'be born')

<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/Renaissance?q=Renaissance>

<sup>ii</sup> Glimpses of World history p. 162

<sup>iii</sup> Glimpses of world history p. 278

<sup>iv</sup> Glimpses of World History p. 276

<sup>v</sup> Adhunik Bharatatil Rajkiya Vichar – Bhaskar Bhole p. 31

<sup>vi</sup> Read this informative article at <http://www.pucl.org/from-archives/Gender/sati.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PpzOeUyYv3U>

<sup>viii</sup> Complete works of Swami Vivekananda in 9 volumes are available online at this address - <http://www.advaitaashrama.org/cw/>

<sup>ix</sup> Download free books on Vivekananda and Ramakrishna from the following site <http://www.advaitaashrama.org/freebooks>

x <http://www.osho.com/library/online-library-samadhi-vivekananda-ramakrishna-28021c64-3c3.aspx>

xi Swami Tejasananda *The Short life of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashram, June 1995

xii Swami Tejasananda – in the above mentioned book

xiii Now a rock memorial is built at Kanyakumari. The website <http://www.rockmemorial.org/>

xiv

[http://www.advaitaashrama.org/cw/volume\\_1/addresses\\_at\\_the\\_parliament/v1\\_c1\\_w\\_hy\\_we\\_disagreee.htm](http://www.advaitaashrama.org/cw/volume_1/addresses_at_the_parliament/v1_c1_w_hy_we_disagreee.htm)



# 2

## Equality: Contribution of Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890)

### Unit Structure

- 2.1 Objective
- 2.2 Introduction – About equality and Phule's life, writings
- 2.3 Mahatma Phule's views on equality and justice.
  - 2.3.1 Phule on social equity and justice.
  - 2.3.2 Phule's political views
  - 2.3.3 Phule on education
  - 2.3.4 Phule's views on empowerment and upliftment of women
  - 2.3.5 Phule's views on economical problems
  - 2.3.6 Phule's views about unorganised labourforce
  - 2.3.7 Phule's views about peasants
  - 2.3.8 Phule's concept of universal religion
  - 2.3.9 Establishment of Satyashodhak Samaj
  - 2.3.10 Phule campaigned against the habit of drinking
- 2.4 Evaluation of Phule's philosophy
  - 2.4.1 Criticism
  - 2.4.2 Contribution
  - 2.4.3 Relevance
  - 2.4.4 Conclusion
- 2.5 Questions

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### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we will discuss Mahatma Phule's social and political ideas. As a recognition of his great work for the down-trodden, he was felicitated and a title of 'Mahatma' was conferred on him by the people. We will discuss his contribution for equality and justice.

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### 2.2 INTRODUCTION :

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Natural inequality is a fact. Human beings differ in physical, mental and moral capacities. But apart from this various types of man-made inequalities exist in Indian Society on the basis of caste, class,

sex, race etc. Actually equality is necessary precondition for liberty, justice and humanity .

Equality means absence of special privilege and adequate and equal opportunities. In 19<sup>th</sup> century age old customs, traditions and superstitions created inequality in Hindu Society.

Mahatma Phule was a great social reformer, activist who raised his voice against every form of injustice and inequality. He was a great exponent of social equality. He occupies a unique position among the social reformers of Maharashtra in the 19th century. While other reformers concentrated more on reforming the social institutions of family and marriage. Jyotiba Phule revolted against the unjust caste system under which million of people had suffered for centuries. Jyotiba Phule was born on 1827 in Satara district. He was from Mali community. His father was a vegetable vender at Poona. Jyotirao's mother passed away when he was hardly one year old. After completing his primary education, Jyotirao had to leave the school and help his father by working on the family's farm. In 1841, he got admission in the Scottish Mission's High School at Poona.

- 1) Admission in Scottish School: It was the turning point in his life. Because in that school he came in contact with Brahmin friends and missionaries ideas of humanity.
- 2) He had painful practical experience : He was invited to attend a wedding of one of his Brahmin friend. Knowing that Jyotiba belonged to the mali caste which was considered to be inferior by the Brahmins, the relatives of the bridegroom insulted and abused him. After this incident Jyotiba made up his mind to defy the caste system and serve the shudras who were deprived of all their rights as human beings under the caste system.
- 3) Phule had read biographies of George Washington and Chhatrapati Shivaji. They were source of inspiration for him.
- 4) Thomas Paine's ideas: Phule was influenced by Thomas Paine's ideas and his book "The Rights of Man". Phule himself has recorded that he was influenced by the ideas of Paine.

**Writings** : Mahatma Jyotiba Phule's philosophy found in his following books

- 1) Brahmanacha Kasab (1969)  
In this Phule has exposed the exploitation of downtrodden by the Brahmin priests.
- 2) Gulamgiri (1873)  
In this book he has given a historical survey of the slavery of lower castes. Narrate the history of Brahmin domination in India. He



advised the people religious epics are made by men, Do not tolerate exploitation on the name of religion.

3) Shetkaryancha Asud (1883)

In this book he has written on exploitation of peasants. He has analysed how peasants were being exploited in those days.

4) Sarvajanic Satyadharma Pustak (1891)

In this book he put forward the concept of universal religion and throws light on blind faiths.

5) Asprushyanchi Kaifiyat

In this book he discussed about crisis in Agriculture and suggested solutions of the agrarian problems. In all these books his method of writing was very aggressive and courageous. His writing was a reaction against the social and religious system of Maharashtra. He said in the social system there was a domination of upper caste. and they were enjoying privileges. There were differences on the basis of caste, sex. No human rights to downtrodden, only sufferings, inferior treatment, injustice, exploitation was there in the Society. This type of social system was supported by religious puran and Vedas. Hence Phule showed strong reaction against this. He sought to create a new culture in the society which is based on equality, justice and humanity.

## **2.3 MAHATMA PHULE'S VIEWS ON EQUALITY ; PHULE AS ACTIVIST AND REFORMER :**

### **2.3.1 1) Mahatma Phule's views on social equality and justice:**

- A) Phule made a powerful pleas to abolish untouchability and the entire caste-system. He revolted against the unjust caste-system under which million of people had suffered for centuries. The Dalit at that time did not have any political, social, educational and economic rights.
- B) He condemned dual morality of the Brahman system. He said equal opportunity should get to all people.
- C) He said by birth all are free and equal. All human beings have natural rights. He was a militant adocate of human rights to the downtrodden.
- D) He protested against man-made inequality which was rooted in Hindu caste-system and varnaviavastha. He struggled fearlessly to implements the reforms in the Hindu society.
- E) He tried to remove inferiority complex from the minds of the people. He made aware to shudras. He advised them take a

education and acquire power, they are not slave but human beings.

- F) He stressed on emancipation of downtrodden. In 1968, he decided to give access to the untouchables to a small bathing tank near his house, He started a school for the Dalit.
- G) Jyotirao's chief aim was to strike at the social structure. Towards this end he was determined to remove ignorance, illiteracy, prejudices and caste based beliefs among the lower castes and free them from the mental slavery resulting from centuries of Brahmin dominance.
- H) He established the satyashodhak Samaj which sowed the seeds of development of the masses and propounded the spread of rational thinking. The movement carried on by the samaj was the first of its kind to reach the remote villages. He carried on the social reform movements based on social equality.
- I) Phule believed in the equality of men and women. He did not merely stress the equality of men but also equality of men and women. For Phule equality in the society was meaningless. Without equality of man and woman in the family.
- J) He propagated universal humanism based on values of freedom, equality and universal brotherhood. He criticised the caste system through the books "Gulamgiri" and "Brahmanache Kasab". He established the Satyashodhak Samaj. He sowed the seeds of development of masses.

### 2.3.2 Phule's political views :

Phule's political ideas are related with his social ideas. Phule said British raj is not a curse but a boon. It is better than Peshwa's raj. British established. rule of law, equality of laws. The new rulers opened the opportunities in education. He hoped that the new government which believes in equality between man and man would emancipate lower castes from the domination of the Brahmins. He welcomed the British rule as "Divine Dispensation" for he viewed it as God's instrument to rescue the oppressed from the clutches of Brahman demons.

Phule raised the question that what do you mean by independence of the country? Freedom means political freedom? Freedom means uppercaste freedom only. After independence will uppercaste allowed shudras for equal rights?

Criticism of the British rule - Though Phule preferred British rule, he was aware of shortcomings of the former and he never hesitated to point them out openly.

Thus Phule was committed not to the Britishers but for the justice and equality of downtrodden. Phule's criticism of the British

government emanated out of his concern for the welfare and the status of the lower castes in contemporary society.

### **2.3.3 Phule on education :**

Phule suggested compulsory, universal and creative education.

- (A) Education of women and the lower caste; he believed, deserved priority.

Hence at home he began educating his wife savitribai and open girl's first school in India in August 1848. Only eight girls were admitted on the first day. Steadily the number of students increased. Jotirao opened two more girl's schools during 1851-52.

He also started a school for the lower classes, especially the Mahars and Mangs. Thus the pioneering work done by Phule in the field of female and lower castes education was unparalleled in the history of education in India.

- (B) Phule was the first Indian social reformer who repeatedly urged the alien government to pay attention to primary education which was neglected.

### **2.3.4 Phule's views on empowerment and upliftment of women**

- A) He believed in the equality of men and women. He stressed on women's education, emancipation of women. He brought women in public life. He said equality and oneness is necessary for the development of the country.
- B) He gave education to his wife savitribai and trained her for the school. Thus Savitribai was the first women teacher in India.
- C) In order to empower women he opposed child marriage. He initiated widow-remarriage and started a home for widows. In that time widow remarriage were banned and child-marriage was very common among the Brahmins and in the Hindu society. Many widows were young and not all of them could live in a manner in which the orthodox people expected them to live. Some of the widows resorted to abortion or left their illegitimate children to their fate by leaving them on the streets. Realizing the dangers of a widow giving birth to a child conceived in unfortunate circumstances after her husbands death, he opened a home for newborn infants in 1863 to prevent infanticides and suicides.

### **2.3.5 Phule's views on economical problems :**

Phule was not economic theorist but he had a keen observation about the exploited class. He was concerned about the status of shudras, untouchables and women in Indian society, while in economic terms he was interested in peasantry and its problems. According to him following points are important about Indian economy :-

- a) The high caste nationalist viewed industrialisation as the only solution to the economic problem of India. Phule on the other hand talked from the point of view of improving agriculture since he perceived Indian economy primarily as the agricultural economy.
- b) Second thing is farmers were being exploited by the money-lenders and Brahmin officers of the revenue and irrigation departments.
- d) Another problem faced by the rural economy was that of the unfair competition by the British goods. Because of the inflow of these cheap and superior goods, the indigenous craftsmen of the villages and town's suffered great losses and in many cases they had to close down their hereditary business. It increased unemployment in the rural areas.
- e) Phule suggested certain solutions to these problems. The first and the most important solution to the problem of the poverty of the farmers which Phule suggested was construction of bunds, tanks and dams so that sufficient water was made available to the farm.

He asked the government to reduce the burden of taxes on farmers in order to make agriculture profitable.

### **2.3.6 Mahatma Phule was concerned with the welfare of the unorganised labour force.**

### **2.3.7 Phule was a militant advocate of peasants rights also. He suggested a number of solutions to improve the conditions of the agriculture sector.**

### **2.3.8 Phule's concept of Universal religion –**

Phule's social ideas are based on his analysis of Hindu religion.

- a) Phule believed in one God. He regarded God as a creator of this world and all men and women are his children. Phule discarded idolatry, ritualism, asceticism and the idea of incarnation. No intermediary between God and devotee was considered essential by him.
- b) He published 'Sarvajanic Dharma Pustak' - Jotirao refused to regard the Vedas as sacrosanct. He opposed idolatry, and denounced the Charurvarnya. He stressed the unity of man and envisaged a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. He was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism destroy the unity of man. He tried to emphasis on Universal religion.
- c) Phule tried to prove that the history of Hinduism was the history of Brahmin domination and slavery of shudras. He found

cunningness, selfishness and hypocrisy in sacred scriptures than a discussion on true religion.

- d) Thus we find that Phule's religious ideas were influenced by christianity but he never adocated conversion. Phul's religion was mainly and primarily concerned about secular matters. He believed in Unity of life and envisaged a society based on humanitarian principles.

Phule was aware that religious bigotry and aggressive nationalism destroy the unity of man.

### **2.3.9 Established 'Satya Shodhak Samaj' and started movement**

The main objective of the organization were to liberate the shudras and atishudras and to prevent their exploitation by the Brahmins.

The Satyashodhak movement and its founder Phule totally rejected the Vedic traition and the Aryan heritage. Phule regarded the Aryans as conquerors and destroyers of th indigenou s non-Aryan culture. He lashed out against the Vedas and described them as frauds. He made fun of the Puranas. He did not reject religion but insisted on its proper understanding. He denounced those who cheated others in the name of religion.

The Satyashodhaks were against intermediaries in all spheres of life. In religion, they were against the priest who was the intermediary between God and an individual.

In politics, they attacked bureaucracy which spoil the relations between the subjects and the queen who ruled over India.

In the economic sphere they compaigned against the managers who were stumbling blocks between the employees and employers who cheated both the consumers and producers i.e. the peasants in the rural areas. In rural areas the peasants suffered most at the hands of both the Bhatji and the shetji. In Phule's writings he exposed the fraudulent practices of both these classes which were identified with certain castes.

### **2.3.10 Phule campaigned against the widespread habit of drinking**

Phule fearlessly criticised the decisions of the alien rurers which did not contibute to the welfare of the masses.

When the Government wanted to grant more licences for liquor-shops, Jotirao condemned this move, as he believed that addiction to liquor would ruin many poor families. He expressed concern over the evil effects of drinking on the peasants. The policy of prohibition was supported by the leaders of the Satyashodhak Samaj.

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## 2.4 EVALUATION :

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In place of exploitative Indian social order, Phule wanted to establish a society founded on principles of Individual liberty and equality and in place of Hinduism he would have liked to put universal religion.

Throughout his life Jotirao Phule fought for the emancipation of the downtrodden people and the struggle, which he launched at a young age ended only when he died on 28th November 1890.

### 2.4.1 Criticism

1) Phule have been charged that he created controversy of Brahmins and non-brahmins. His language was aggressive. His critics made fun of his ignorance of grammar, language and his interpretations of history. The established scholars in his times did not take Phule's arguments seriously.

But his critics did not realise that Phule's acrimonious criticism was basically a outburst of a genuine concern for the equal rights of human beings.

Phule's deep sense of commitment to basic human values made it difficult for him to restrain himself when he witnessed injustice and atrocities committed in the name of religion by those who were supposed to be its custodians.

### 2.4.2 Contribution of Mahatma Jotiba Phule

- 1) Mahatma Phule was the first defender of human equality and rights. We should understand and appreciate the profound significance of his unflinching espousal of the rights of man which remained till the end of his life a major theme of his writings and a goal of his actions.
- 2) He was First revolutionary and leader of downtrodden, peasants and supporter of women's education.
- 3) He paved the way for the new era of social activism. He established many institutions and tried to remove manmade inequality, He was the first active leader of downtrodden.
- 4) He introduced us to humanity.
- 5) He was propagator of Human unity and national progress.
- 6) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said "Mahatma Phule the greatest Shudra of modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes who preached the gospel that

for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule."

- 7) Phule's views and philosophy was based on facts, reality, experiences and observation. In that sense his philosophy was not utopian but realistic.
- 8) He was a source of inspiration for Maharshi Shinde, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Gadgebaba and Sahu Maharaj.
- 9) He was a Founder of many movements - 1) Movement against discrimination (2) Movement of Dalit (3) Movement of women's education. (4) peasant's movement (5) movement against blind faith.

### **2.4.3 Relevance**

In Modern period to understand the nature of social problems and the problems of equality we should learn and analysis Phule's ideas about equality. He was main and the first exponent of equality in modern Indian political history.

### **2.4.4 Conclusion –**

He was the father of Indian social revolution. He raised his voice against every form of injustice.

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## **2.5 QUESTIONS**

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- 1) Discuss Mahatma Phule's Critique of Brahmanism
- 2) Explain Mahatma Phule's views on women emancipation.
- 3) Examine Jotiba Phule's ideas on equality.



## Equality : contribution of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar

### Unit Structure

- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Introduction
  - 3.2.1 Influences
  - 3.2.2 Writings, books
  - 3.2.3 Active works
- 3.3. Dr. Ambedkar's views on equality are related to his following views -
  - 3.3.1 Views on British rule to India
  - 3.3.2 On democracy
  - 3.3.3 On state socialism
  - 3.3.4 Contribution for drafting of the Indian constitution
  - 3.3.5 Attack on the caste system
  - 3.3.6 On removal of untouchability
  - 3.3.7 Views on Ideal society
  - 3.3.8 Views on the position of women
  - 3.3.9 motto
- 3.4 Evaluation
- 3.5 Conclusion
- 3.6 References

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### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

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This unit deals with the thought of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. The purpose is -

- ❖ To introduce Dr. Ambedkar's ideas on equality.
- ❖ To outline the ideological basis of his struggle for abolition of the caste system.
- ❖ To understand the significance of Dr. Ambedkar's social and political thought.
- ❖ to know the contribution made by him for the upliftment of the depressed classes.



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## 3.2 INTRODUCTION

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Dr. Ambedkar (1891-1956) was the champion of human rights and emancipator of the untouchables. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar popularly known as 'Babasaheb' was born on 14th April 1891. He spent his whole life fighting against discrimination, the system of chaturvarna and the Hindu caste system. He belonged to the Mahar caste, who were treated as untouchables and subjected to intense socio-economic discrimination. His mission in life was to establish a new social order based on justice, liberty and equality. He was not just a thinker but put his thoughts in action.

### 3.2.1 From his childhood he was influenced by following factors

1) Personal suffering -

Dr. Ambedkar experienced caste discrimination and humiliations right from the childhood. In the school he was not allowed to sit inside the class. He married in 1906 and the family moved to Bombay. He was very much disturbed by the segregation and discrimination that he faced.

2) Influence of Buddha and Mahatma Phule -

After his matriculation he entered the University of Bombay, becoming one of the first persons of untouchable origin to enter a college in India. This success provoked celebrations in his community and after a public ceremony he was presented with a biography of Buddha by his teacher. This gift must have made a profound impact on the mind of young Ambedkar. Buddha and Jotirao Phule have exercised a deep influence on Ambedkar's ideas on society, religion and morality. Jyotiba Phule radically re-examined the nature of Hinduism. Ambedkar's thought is the continuation of this.

3) Influence of Kabir :

He also believed in the teachings of Kabir who had condemned the caste system.

4) His legal approach :

With the help of a scholarship from Sayajirao Gaekwad, Maharaja of Baroda, he attended Columbia University, USA, and later on with hard work managed to study at the London school of Economics. In England he attained a doctorate and also became a barrister. Hence, his political views were influenced by his legal approach.

## 5) Influence of John Dewey

His thinking was based on a deep faith in the goals of equity and liberty. Liberalism and the philosophy of John Dewey also influenced his thinking.

## 6) His father and grandfather were in the British Army; hence he was exposed to British administration and their benefits.

7) When he was studying in U.S.A. he was impressed by two important things, the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment of the US constitution which gave freedom to the Negroes.

Because of above influences, Dr. Ambedkar constantly gave attention to the problem of bringing about equality for the downtrodden untouchable community forms the basis of his thinking and writings. After his education he dedicated himself to the task of upliftment of the untouchable community.

Soon he won the confidence of the untouchable and became their leader.

**3.2.2 Literary work or writing :**

Dr. Ambedkar was not only a political leader and social reformer but also a scholar and thinker. He has written extensively on various social and political matters.

1. "Annihilation of castes."
2. "Who were the shudras"
3. "The untouchables, Buddha and his Drama"
4. "Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah"

**3.2.3 Active work :**

## 1) He Established many organisations -

Dr. Ambedkar established The Bahishkrit Hitkarni Sabha' in 1924. In order to institutionalize the socio-political activities of the depressed classes.

He also established 'Independent Labour Party' in 1936. to protect the political interest of the scheduled castes and other weaker sections.

He created 'All India Scheduled Caste Federation' in 1942, to spread higher education among the scheduled caste.

## 2) He Established educational institutions

He founded the people's education society in 1945

## 3) He Started newspapers and brought awareness among the people.

He propagated his views from newspapers like the 'Mooknayak', 'Bahishkrit Bharat' and 'Janata'.

- 4) He has done many Satyagrahs e.g. Kala Ram temple satyagrah at Nasik in 1930, as the depressed classes were denied entry to the temple for worshipping the Gods. To mobilise and organise untouchables he led a number of Satyagrahs. eg. chowdar lake satyagraha at Malad.
- 5) He participated in the Round Table conference in order to protect the interests of the untouchables.
- 6) He became the chairman of the drafting committee of the constituent Assembly and played a very important role in framing the Indian constitution. He is known as the architect of Indian constitution.
- 7) He Adopted Buddhism -  
He felt that the removal of untouchability and the upliftment of the untouchables would not be possible by remaining a Hindu. Hence he embraced Buddhism and appealed to his followers to do the same.

### **3.3 DR. AMBEDKAR'S VIEWS ON EQUALITY**

**Dr.Ambdkar's views on equality are related to his following views :-**

**3.3 (1) About the British Rule in India :** He gave Priority to social reforms.

He criticized the British rule for failing in its duty to uplift he untouchables. He belived, if priority is given to the political emancipation, it would mean transfer of power from foreign rulers to the upper caste hindues.

He insisted that in free India, the untouchable community must get a proper share in the power structure; otherwise independence would merely mean rule by the upper castes.

**3.3 (2) On Democracy :**

**A)** According to Dr. Ambedkar, modern democracy is based on consent of the people and aims at welfare of the people. He defines democracy as, "a form and a method of government whereby revolutionery changes in the economic and social life of the people are brought about without blood-shed". In democracy, the persons who are duly authorised by the people to rule over them try to introduce changes in the social and economic life of the people, so that welfare of the people could be possible.

- B)** Dr Ambedkar supported the idea of all-round democracy - According to him the political democracy cannot be successful unless there is social and economic democracy. Casteless and classless society is must for the success of democracy, Therefore, he wanted to base his ideal society on liberty, equality and fraternity. He said, in a democracy, the individual is an end in itself. Individual has inalienable rights which must be guaranteed by the constitution.
- C)** Ambedkar's idea of democracy is much more than just a form of government. He said representative government, elections, parties and parliament are formal institutions of democracy. They cannot be effective in an undemocratic atmosphere.

**Democracy Needed equality :** In the Indian society so long as caste barriers and caste-based inequalities exist, real democracy cannot operate. In this sense democracy means a spirit of fraternity and equality and not only a political arrangement. Thus according to him for democracy just social foundation is must.

**D) Economic Equality :**

Dr. Ambedkar was thinking that freedom of the nation would not ensure real freedom for all the people. Social and economic inequalities have dehumanized the Indian society.

According to him following factors are necessary for the successful operation of democracy. -

He favoured the parliamentary form of government, but stressed that certain other conditions must be fulfilled for this form of government.

- 1) Existence of the opposition -
- 2) A neutral and non-political civil services
- 3) Ethical and moral factors.

People and politicians must follow certain norms in public life. Norms of honest and responsible behaviour must develop in the society.

- 4) Majority must always respect the views of the minority.
- 5) Casteless and classless society.

**3.3.(3) Suggested state socialism**

Dr. Ambedkar propounded the idea of 'state socialism'. He had developed this theory of State socialism in his book "State and Minorities". State socialism means that the state would implement a

socialist programme by controlling the industrial and agriculture sectors.

To achieve economic equality, Dr. Ambedkar proposes 'State-socialism'. It envisages, "Putting an obligation on the state to plan the economic life of the people on lines which would lead highest point of productivity without closing any avenue to private enterprises and also provide for the "equitable distribution of wealth".

He states that men differ from each other with respect to heredity, Social atmosphere and his own efforts, but they should be given equal opportunity for the development of their personality.

He believed that it is not enough to enumerate fundamental rights in the constitution as unemployment and fear of starvation may compel an individual to lose his rights, Therefore, the state should create necessary economic conditions in which the people would be able to enjoy those rights.

Everybody should be given fullest liberty to choose the profession of his choice. In order to avoid exploitation of one class by another, he believed that there should be equitable distribution of wealth for which, he gives certain suggestion like nationalization of key and basic industries which will be owned and run by the state, agriculture to be state industry etc.

### **3.3.(4) Dr. Ambedkar and Drafting of the Indian constitution**

He was the Chairman of the drafting committee of the constituent Assembly of India. His legal expertise and knowledge of laws of different countries was very helpful in framing the Indian constitution.

- a) Constitution must be treated as a basic and sacred document and everybody should work accordingly.
- b) To avoid the misuse of the constitution he made detailed provisions in the constitution.
- c) Provided for fundamental rights of the people and gave guarantees of Liberty, equality and justice. Article 32 of the Indian constitution which guarantees judicial protection to fundamental rights. Such protection makes the rights real and meaningful.
- d) Incorporated many safeguards for the minorities. eg. reservation policy.
- e) Provided for strong central government. Thus Ambedkar played important role in drafting the Indian constitution.

### **3.3.5 Attack on the caste system -**

Dr. Ambedkar was very pained by the caste-system. His main battle was against the caste system. According to him caste is an

obstacle in the growth of national spirit. It does not allow progress of the lower caste. Ambedkar made ceaseless efforts for the removal of untouchability. He held the views that the removal of untouchability was linked to the abolition of the caste system. It could be possible only by discarding the religious notions about the caste system. The caste hierarchy and the practice of untouchability finds justification in religious scriptures. Therefore, in the course of his analysis of the caste system, he examined the Hindu religious philosophy and criticized it.

In his books 'who were the shudras?' he dispelled many misconceptions about untouchability. According to Ambedkar, casteism is an expression of mental slavery of the Hindus. It made them insensitive. He argued that it is the caste system of the Hindu society which has completely degenerated and divided the whole nation.

Caste had made Hindu society stagnant. It is an obstacle in the growth of national spirit. Caste system perpetrates injustice on the lower castes. It does not allow progress of the lower castes. They are denied education, good livelihood, and human dignity. The caste system has dehumanized them thoroughly.

He argued that it is the caste system of the Hindu society which has degenerated and divided the Indian nation. There was an urgent need of moral regeneration of the Hindu society. According to him in Hindu society it is the caste of the people which determine their class. It has completely disorganized and demoralized the Hindus. Dr. Ambedkar said that unemployment among Hindus is due to the caste system because there is no readjustment of occupations. As such Dr. Ambedkar was the protagonist of a new social order. He attacked the caste system.

He made extensive study of Hindu scriptures and he convinced the people that there is nothing shameful in untouchable's part, nothing inferior in their heritage. Thus, Dr. Ambedkar created self-respect among the untouchables.

Ambedkar warns that nothing worthwhile can be created on the basis of caste. We can build neither a nation nor morality on this basis. Therefore a casteless society must be created.

### **3.3.6 Removal of untouchability**

He said Untouchability is a product of the caste system. He condemned all the practice of untouchability. It is baseless. He demanded total abolition of untouchability.

Ambedkar made ceaseless efforts for the removal of untouchability. From 1924 onwards, he led the movement of untouchables till the end of his life. For removal of untouchability Dr. Ambedkar stressed on following remedies :-

1) Education

Ambedkar believed that education would greatly contribute to the improvement of the untouchables. Education makes man enlightened makes him aware of his self-respect and helps him to lead a better life materially.

One of the causes of the degradation of the untouchables was that they were denied the right to education. He appealed to the people of lower caste to reform their way of life by educating themselves. He believed that education would elevate their status and make them free from the superstitions and many other kinds of social evils. He also believed that the untouchable, by educating themselves would become conscious about their existence and their rights.

Therefore, he mobilized the lower castes and funded various centers of learning. He established 'People's Education Society' in 1945, for the spread of education among the untouchables.

2) Economic progress

Another very important remedy which Ambedkar upheld was that the untouchables should free themselves of the village community and its economic bondage.

In the traditional set up, the untouchables were bound to specific occupation. He urged them to stop performing the work which were reserved for them like carrying of dead cows. He also advised them to stop, drinking alcohol. Dr. Ambedkar insisted that the untouchables should stop doing their traditional work. They should acquire new skills and start new professions. Education would enable them to get employment. With growing industrialization, there were greater opportunities in the cities. Untouchables would quit villages and find a new job in the city. Once their dependence is over, they can easily throw away the psychological burden of being untouchables.

3) Self-help - Untouchables should realise that they are the equals of caste Hindus. They must throw away their bondage. According to Ambedkar, oppressed classes must generate self-respect among themselves. The best policy for their uplift was the policy of self-help. By working hard and casting off mental servitude, they can attain an equal status with the remaining Hindu society.

4) Struggle for power and political participation

He said the downtrodden should assert and win their rights through conflict. He advised them to organise politically and demand rights and adequate share in power.

Therefore, he formed political organizations of untouchables.

- 5) Liberated people from the clutches of religious scriptures and traditions :

He and his followers burnt 'Manusmriti'. It was a revolutionary step which sought to denounce the in-human laws of scripture. Throughout his life Ambedkar made efforts to reform the philosophical basis of Hinduism. Every Hindu is a slave of the Vedas and Shastras. He said the root of untouchability is in Hindu scriptures. He said these scriptures are wrong and therefore need to be discarded. He showed how theological support was taken by the upper castes and systematically suppressed the sudras and denied rights to them. He denied theological support to the caste system.

- 6) Conversion -

According to Dr. Ambedkar, Hindu religion has certain drawbacks e.g. Hindu laws are not uniformly applied to all. In one of his speeches, he said that "religion is for man and not man for religion." He also put forward some questions to the depressed classes, like why do you want to remain in a religion which prohibits you from entering social place and its temples? Dr. Ambedkar believed that the religion which does not recognize a human being as a human being is not a religion. Therefore he rejected Hinduism.

Dr. Ambedkar was attracted towards Buddhism as according to him, Buddhism is based on the principles of liberty, equality and social justice. His final act of revolt against injustice in the hindu society was his embracing Buddhism, along with millions of his followers, in 1956.

7. Dr. Ambedkar also insisted that it is the primary responsibility of the government to promote the welfare of the untouchables and that they should be represented at all levels of government. He was of the opinion that sufficient representation in the governing bodies would enable the 'depressed classes' to redress grievances through legal means.

- 3.3.7 Dr. Ambedkar** visualized an ideal society based on "Liberty, equality and fraternity. - According to him society should not be static, rigid, traditional and orthodox in behavior. It should give fair and equal chance to each and everybody for their progress and bind all the people in to one common bond. He was aware that liberty alone would not be sufficient. Liberty and equality must exist simultaneously. According to him political democracy without social democracy and economic justice is meaningless.



The unity of culture, he believed, could be developed only when the society is based on liberty and justice.

### **3.3.8 Dr. Ambedkar's views on the position of women -**

- a) He believed that women should have equal position with that of men in the society.

Dr. Ambedkar was influenced by the views of Gautam Buddha on women. According to Buddha women are one of the seven Treasures and a thing of supreme value. Dr. Ambedkar blamed man for giving woman a degraded position in the society. Hence he fought for giving justice to women.

As a member of Bombay Legislative Council, Dr. Ambedkar fought for the 'Maternity Benefit Bill' to recognize the dignity of women. As a law minister of India he introduced the 'Hindu Code Bill' in the year 1951. This bill introduced few new things in the existing law such as; right of property to women, share to daughters from the parental property, provision for divorce etc.

In his speech which Dr. Ambedkar delivered in D.C. Women's college of Amaravati in 1942 he said that he measured the progress of the community by the degree of progress women had achieved. He asked the women to maintain hygiene, to educate themselves and their children, and to overcome inferiority complex.

### **3.3.9 "Educate, organise and agitate" was the motto of Dr. Ambedkar.**

Adopting this motto he created a sense of awareness among the downtrodden. This resulted in the emergence of Dalit power in the Indian Society.

## **3.4 EVALUATION**

Contribution :

- (1) Dr. Ambedkar visualised an ideal society which is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. What are the forces operating against these according to him following factors -

- a) Casteism
- b) Communalism
- c) Economic exploitation

Dr. Ambedkar fought for a society free from caste-domination and class-exploitation. So long as caste and class are in existence, Ambedkar's thought would be relevant as an inspiration in the fight against them.

- 2) Dr. Ambedkar's political philosophy has given rise to a large number of Dalit political parties in Maharashtra. It is due to his efforts that the depressed classes could be emancipated from the social evils like untouchability, ignorance and exploitation.

- 3) He was a path showing personality for one and all :  
He always said"Learn to live in this world with self-respect. You should always cherish some ambition to do something in this world." He always stressed on self-help. These principle help us to develop our personality.
- 4) He Struggled for a just social order. He demanded equal status, equal opportunity and equal treatment, equal rights and dignity of the depressed classes.
- 5) He played important role in framing the constitution.
- 6) Fight against untouchability -  
He created awareness among them by speeches, writings and satyagraha. Made provision in the constitution for the abolition of untouchability.
- 7) Reservation of seats – He made provision in the constitution for equality, liberty and justice.
- 8) Organised Dalits –  
Establishe socio-political organization for them  
In 1924-Bahishkrit Hitakaranni Sabha  
In1937- Independent Labour party  
In n1942 – scheduled castes federation.
- 9) Hindus code Bill –  
As a law minister, he drafted the hindu code Bill.
- 10) In the words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was a symbol of revolt against all the oppressive feature of hindu society. In his long political life, he organised and politicized a large number of other depressed classes.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

He brought about a total change in the character of the 'Dalit Politics in Maharashtra.

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# 4

## Mahadeo Govind Ranade

### Unit Structure:

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Political Thought
- 4.3 Social Reforms
- 4.4 Political Liberalism
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Questions
- 4.7 Suggestion Readings

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES:

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1. To comprehend political ideas of M.G. Ranade.
2. To assess the contribution of M.G. Ranade to social reforms.
3. To evaluate the work of M.G. Ranade as a liberal political thinker.

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### 4.1. INTRODUCTION:

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The British rule also brought with it the rich array of socio-political, economic and philosophical ideas that were prevalent in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. Indians got to know about most of these thoughts after the introduction of modern education through the medium of English in 1834. The most popular of various isms that made an impact on the Indian educated classes was of course liberalism. It was the genius of Raja Ram Mohan Roy that, much before the introduction of English education, he got himself acquainted with British liberal ideas through his contacts with the officials of the East India Company and various Europeans with whom he had interacted in Calcutta. The Indian renaissance, or to be precise, Indian social reform movement of the nineteenth century owed a lot to the liberal ideas made popular by the British mode of education. In the Bombay province or the present day Maharashtra, liberalism made its presence felt in the first half of the nineteenth century with the works of Balshastri Jambhekar and Gopal Hari Deshmukh (Lokahitwadi).

Nevertheless, it was Mahadeo Govind Ranade whose firm commitment to Liberalism made it a popular doctrine throughout India.

Liberalism is not, in the strict sense, an ideology with well defined set of ideas such as Fascism, Capitalism or Socialism. It is a much flexible set of notions that underlines the authority of reason to manage the affairs of life. Individual, with her right to freedom of expression and choice of actions is the major thrust of Liberalism. A liberal person, for instance, does not conform to the conventional ideas, dogmas or creeds. He may even refuse to recognize traditional institutions. Equality of all human beings is a deeply ingrained principle of Liberalism. It believes that human society keeps progressing all the time and with it the human beings too change for better. Liberalism is essentially a secular doctrine not in the sense of opposing the institution of religion but teaching tolerance of all faiths. It also stands for restricting the interference of state in human affairs to the minimum. By its very nature, Liberalism supports democracy as the ideal form of government.

Most Indian thinkers who got influenced by Liberalism, by and large, accepted many of the principles associated with the doctrine. However, they also made necessary alterations in some of the principles keeping in mind the social realities of India. Ranade was one of those thinkers who accepted liberal ideas but also moulded them in a way so that they suited Indian society. In the closing years of nineteenth century, Ranade's influence on the intellectual life of Western region of India was so immense that many scholars called the last three decades of that century as 'Ranade Age'. Ranade was a multi-faceted personality. He was scholar, jurist, economist, religious and social reformer, educationis, politician, visionary and journalist.

Mahadeo Govind Ranade was born on January 18, 1842, at Niphad in Nasik district. He had distinguished himself in studies and could seek the best possible education that was available that time. He was among the first graduates of India and was also the first Indian Fellow of the University of Bombay. He completed his Masters in 1864 and the Law course in 1866. His first job was that of a lecturer at the Elphinstone College, Bombay. After getting the Law degree he was appointed as Oriental Translator to the Government of Bombay. In addition to his regular job, he was also working as the Administrator of Akkalkot State and subsequently as Judicial Officer in Kolhapur State. In 1868, he was again appointed as professor of English and History in Elphinstone College. He was ultimately assigned to judicial service and in 1871, was appointed as a subordinate Judge at Poona.

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## 4.2. POLITICAL THOUGHT:

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In the sphere of politics, Ranade was usually referred to as a political Rishi. He was committed to Liberalism and Constitutionalism. His involvement in public affairs began in 1862, when he was barely 20. He accepted the responsibility of editing the English section of a bilingual periodical *Indu Prakash*, which also had a Marathi section. He could give expression to his ideas on socio-political issues through the columns of this periodical. Thereafter, in 1885, he was appointed the Law Member of the Bombay Legislative Council, an honour that was conferred on him again in 1893. In 1870, he established Sarvajanic Sabha in Poona. Later, he started participating actively in the functioning of Parmahans Mandali, which subsequently got transformed into the Prarthana Samaj, an organization that was working on similar lines that were peculiar to the Brahmo Samaj established by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Ranade's political as well as social ideas could be derived from his two major works viz. *Essays on Indian Economics* and *Rise of the Maratha Power*. His political ideas were similar to those of the Indian National Congress. In fact, he was the inspiration behind Allan Octavian Hume's initiative that he took in the inception of the Congress. Among his political disciples there were many but the most prominent was Gopal Krishna Gokhale. During his professorship at Elphinstone College, Ranade came into contact with remarkable intellectuals, the most prominent among them was Alexander Grant who prompted him to systematically study western science and philosophy. When he began his study of philosophy, he was particularly impressed by the ideas of Herbert Spencer. Moreover, he was also influenced by the ideas of John Stuart Mill, Walter Bagehot et al. The western ideas did play a role in his belief that the British rule in India was providential. He believed that there were many positive ideas and values that Indians had to learn from the Western intellectual wealth.

Ranade, however, was not a blind follower of the West. He was aware of the shortcomings of the Western civilisation and at the same time knew what were the most desirable and positive values of ancient Indian culture and intellectual heritage. He said: "You are unconsciously influenced by the traditions in which you are brought up, by the very milk which you have drunk from your mother's breast or influenced by those things in the world you cannot discover." Commenting on his veneration for the Indian intellectual legacy, his famous disciple, Gopal Krishna Gokhale observed: "We could not break with the past, if we would, we must not break with it if we could."

Ranade had a great admiration for the intellectual output of ancient India.

It must, however, be made clear that Ranade was not a revivalist. On the contrary, he was a steadfast critic of revivalism and would condemn those who described ancient past of as the 'Golden Age' in the history of India. In the context he asked: "What shall we revive? Shall we revive the twelve forms of sons, or eight forms of marriage which included capture and recognised mixed and illegitimate intercourse? Shall we revive the Niyoga system of procreating sons on our brothers' wives when widowed?...Shall we revive the Sati and infanticide customs or flinging of living men into the rivers, or over rocks, or hook-swinging, or crushing beneath Jagannath car?" He emphasized that in the society of his time, which he considered a living organism, revival was not possible. He, however, clarified that though revival was impossible, the reformation was not only possible but also necessary. He wholeheartedly recommended reforms in Indian society.

Though Ranade was an important member of British administration, he was critical of it because of its centralisation. He condemned the administration of his time because it could find out the ways and means to harass people. In view of this he favoured the strengthening of the institutions of local self-government. He was in favour of assigning real and more powers to these institutions. He also supported the principle of people's power to choose their representatives. He even suggested that in matters such as levying of taxes, people should have the final say. In 1893, he observed: "Freedom means making laws, levying taxes, imposing punishment and appointing officials." Ranade wished that all these functions should be performed by people's representatives.

Ranade was among the earliest political commentators who had systematically studied the nature and functions of the institution of state. For him the state was an organic entity. He believed that the state represented the highest and the most disinterested wisdom of the times. In his opinion the state in its collective capacity represented the power, the wisdom, the mercy and charity of its citizens. Nonetheless, it must be made plain that he favoured a welfare rather than a police state. In Ranade's opinion the state should be a national organ for looking after national needs in all those fields in which the efforts of an individual or of a cooperative organisation were not likely to be effective. Additionally, the state could enable citizens to become nobler, richer and more perfect in whatever the field they were engaged in. Ranade also viewed state as an agency to promote industrialisation and social reforms.

Being a liberal, Ranade was naturally inclined towards individual freedom and individual's progress. He had an abiding faith in

individual's ingenuity and responsibility. For him the state was not an end in itself but a means to create suitable conditions wherein the individual could progress and lead a 'nobler, happier, richer and perfect' life. Nonetheless, Ranade did not approve of giving an absolute free hand to individual. He believed in an enlightened individual who would never misuse the freedom made available to her. His individual would not be an anarchist to defy all restrictions put on her by the state and society. For individual to lead a contented and meaningful life, Ranade supported the institution of private property. Private property, according to Ranade, would not only ensure a comfortable life to individual it would also ensure requisite conditions of leisure so that she could pursue meaningful activities that would ultimately be beneficial for the entire society. His individual had to be a self-reliant and a confident being. For personal needs and welfare she should be capable enough to fulfill them herself. His individual was not expected to look for external help for her progress. He explained: "State help is after all a subordinate factor in the problem. Our own exertion and our resolutions must conquer the difficulties which are chiefly of our own creation." So Ranade was an individualist with a difference. His individualism was not exactly a reproduction of the Western concept of individualism that guaranteed absolute and unbridled freedom to individual so long as she did not violate laws. Although Ranade stood for individual freedom, he wanted that it should help an individual to become enlightened, self-reliant and a productive member of society.

Discussing the liberty in the context of India of his time, Ranade pointed out that the liberties that Indians enjoyed were actually concession made available to them by the foreign rulers. He further clarified that those liberties were not in reality those of Indians but a bonus made available by the Raj because of the compulsions of circumstances. The real liberties would be pulled off when all Indians engaged in varied fields of activities would strive for a change in their social standings and for that purpose would prepare themselves for great sacrifices. Ranade believed that for progress, purification and perfection of individual, her mind should be liberated. Ranade contended that a state that would guarantee various liberties to its citizens had to be a welfare state. He suggested that a welfare state had to do much more than maintaining law and order, protecting the geographical integrity, collecting taxes and extending liberties to the people; it had to prepare economic plans so that the materialistic, educational and health related needs of the people could be fulfilled. Ranade was in favour of enlarging the activities of the state.

It was a bit surprising that Ranade on the one hand defended the institution of private property and on the other hand condemned the

policy of *laissez faire* (free market economy) that was purportedly the economic strategy of the British Raj. He held the view that Indian poverty was the outcome of *laissez faire*. He refused to accept the validity of 'Drain Theory' in regard with poverty of India. He conceded that Drain could be one of the factors but asserted the real reason of India's poverty was to be found in its lack of industrialisation and over-dependence of agrarian economy. In this context too, Ranade wanted state to intervene as he believed that it would be only through concerted state actions India could get rid of poverty. He favoured state intervention in industry because he could not see many private entrepreneurs contributing to the industrial growth of India. Citing the example of Indian railways, Ranade urged the government to undertake similar ventures to ensure industrial development in India. Ranade further argued that if the government had reservations about getting involved directly in industrial activities, it could indirectly help Indian industry by providing subsidies to the new entrepreneurs.

Ranade also wanted state to intervene in bringing about social reforms in the country. He pointed out that half the battle for the reforms was already won when the British introduced English education in India. Many social reform movements were the offshoots of modern, scientific education through English medium. Though Ranade believed that the ideal method of bringing about social reforms was through persuasion, he did have no objection to state interference in matters of social reforms. He had before him the precedent of sati which was abolished with state intervention. He, therefore, argued that when the social reformers could not meet with any significant success, the state should step in to carry forward the project of social reforms. Ranade regarded the spheres of society, politics and economy as inter-dependent and inter-connected. He, therefore, reasoned that it would be only in a progressive society that the political and economic ideals would be accomplished. To make society progressive and enlightened the need of social reforms could hardly be exaggerated.

Ranade was very well aware of the heterogeneous nature of India society. He was also a keen student of Indian history that taught him that religious and communal differences had brought untold miseries on the country in the past. He steadfastly championed the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. He wished that the two major communities of India should jointly endeavour for the development of the nation. He lamented that after Akbar the Great no other ruler of the country paid any attention to keep the two communities united. While speaking on this subject in the Lucknow session of the Indian Social Conference, Ranade emphasized: "If the lessons of the past history have any value, one thing is quite clear that in this vast country no progress is possible unless both Hindus and Mohammedans join hands together." He also



advocated that the Indians should develop an eclectic attitude in social affairs. They should not have a superiority complex believing that it was the Hindu culture alone that was the repository of all the best values and knowledge. They should make efforts to understand other cultures as well and should also acknowledge and adopt the positive features of those cultures. He acknowledged that the medieval dynasties that happened to be Muslim did contribute abundantly to enrich the culture of India.

Ranade had a metaphysical worldview. He believed in Providence i.e. the care of the Almighty in the lives of human beings. Nonetheless, he did not have a dogmatic approach about his religion. Since he was an individualist, he recognised the fact that each man had a conscience of his own and no person should impose his beliefs on a person of a different creed. It was because of the religious worldview he could juxtapose the best ideas of the past with the political ideas that were prevalent in his time and thus could suggest a better socio-political order for the future.

#### **4.2.1 Check Your Progress:**

1. Critically discuss the political ideas of M.G. Ranade.

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2. Bring out M.G. Ranade's contribution to modern Indian political thought.

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#### **4.3. SOCIAL REFORMS:**

In the context of social reforms, Ranade's major feat was his massive endeavour that went in the inception of the National Social Conference in 1887. He remained devoted to the activities of the Conference until his death in 1901. Ranade thought of an organisation exclusively committed to the cause of social reforms as the Indian

National Congress was committed to political programmes. The first session of the NSC was held immediately after the third session of the INC in Madras in 1887. It was presided over by T. Madhava Rao while Ranade was chosen as the Vice-president of the Conference. Since then it became a practice that the sessions of the Conference were held after the conclusion of the Congress sessions at the same venues and same pavilions. The major objective of the Conference was to coordinate the endeavours of social reforms that were being made in different parts of the country. Ranade remained the most active member of the Conference throughout his life. The speeches he delivered in the sessions of the Conference proved inspirational for the social reformers. He had an extensive view of social reforms that included almost all facets of human life. According to D. G. Karve, "He (Ranade) preached reform not because his conscience urged him to do so, but because his intellect was satisfied that without reform there was no hope for India as a nation."

Ranade saw to it that the social reformers of different regions should remain in constant touch with him. It enabled him to be aware of the various social reform movements that were launched in different provinces of India because of which he could give expression to his views on reforms with a great deal of authority. Ranade was in favour of comprehensive reforms. In the context he said, "We want to work on no single line, but to work on all lines and above all not to break with the past." Here Ranade made a very significant distinction between revivalism and continuity of healthy tradition. He was opposed to revivalism because a blanket revivalism would mean reintroducing many of the evil practices of the ancient past that had become obsolete in the age of science and reason. He, however, did not want to completely wipe out the ancient Indian culture because in his view, in the cultural, philosophical and religious legacy of India there were many ideas and values that could become guiding principles for the modern man. Elaborating this point he added: "The true reformer has not to write on a clean slate. His work is to complete the half-written sentence. He has to produce the ideal out of the actual and by the help of the actual...We cannot break with the past, for it is a rich inheritance." He equated the work of social reform with that of liberation of humankind. A reformer, first of all, declared Ranade, had to free himself from various kinds of shackles that restrained his mind. In his opinion the most significant purpose of social reform was to enlarge the space of liberated ideas and actions of a person so that she could think, feel and act freely.

Through social reform, Ranade intended to give a new shape to society. He was trying to bring about a "change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority

to reason, from unorganised to organised life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to sense of human dignity.” Ranade was aware that to bring out such a change was a tall order but he got himself committed to it because there was no other alternative to improve Indian society. He was not interested in mere outward reform of the individual. He had the plan to take the reform to the spiritual level so that the ultimate purpose of reform should become purification, perfection and liberation of an individual’s mind and thus lifting up her standard of duty and making flawless all her powers.

Ranade prescribed five methods to bring about social reform. They were: i) by persuasion that required making appeals to people so that they would commit to give up evil social practices; ii) by enlightened interpretations of sacred scriptures and ancient tomes so that they favoured reform; iii) by disseminating new moral principles; iv) by extending a helping hand to those caste organisation which had intention to bring about reform in their caste group and iv) by state intervention. It is clear from the prescribed methods that Ranade thought of that he opted for state intervention only as a last resort. In other words Ranade was in favour of petitioning the state to make legislation for reform only if the first four methods failed. For him state intervention was the “least eligible way” that should be resorted to rarely and only for putting an end to a heinous or terrible social evil.

Ranade maintained that individual’s conscience was the key factor in preparing her for reform. Though he did not discount the significance of other motivating factors such as environment, advances of science and technology, or the presence of a fair and responsive government, conscience of an individual, he believed, was the most potent motivating factor that would genuinely prepare an individual for reform. Ranade pointed out that the starting point of the process of social evolution could be detected when individual’s character, fashioned by conscience, got transformed. He held that society was like an organism that kept evolving but the evolution could be differentiated by its continuity and change. Since Ranade was not in favour of severing contacts with the past completely, continuity, for him, was as important a characteristic of the process of evolution as was change. It was because of this reason he was opposed to radicalism in social reform. For him the bulk of social reform was in reality an exercise to reinvent the glorious institutions of India’s ancient past. He made it plain that he was not in favour of social change because it was a standard social practice or value in other societies. What he was trying to seek by social reform was to reinvent the best traditions of the Indian past, shaping them suitably as per the requirements of the conditions of his time and the directives of the conscience. The most reprehensible social practices that caused

offense to human conscience that Ranade identified included the practice of child marriage, polygamy, heavy dowries, disfigurement and compulsory celibacy of widows, caste restriction against inter-dining and inter-marriage, the practice of untouchability, denial of education to women and wasteful marriage and funeral expenses.

Though he was in favour of reinventing the positive customs and institutions of ancient India he did not approve of the concept of revivalism. In his famous statement, the half of which has been reproduced above, he makes his position very clear about revivalism. The remaining part of the statement was: "Shall we revive the old liberties taken by the Rishis and by the wives of the Rishis with the marital tie?...Shall we revive shakti worship?... Sati?...the dead the buried or burnt are dead, buried and burnt once for all and the dead past, therefore, cannot be revived except by a reformation of the old materials into new organised beings." So, Ranade was not a revivalist; he was a social reformer who did not sever his contacts with the customs and traditions of ancient India. He favoured gradualism in matters of social reform because it could coalesce perfectly with the conservative nature of Hindu society that loathed revolution and swift alterations. Ranade deliberately opted for gradualism in social reform because he did not want to antagonize the orthodox elements of Hindu society lest they became more narrow-minded. His liberal principles taught him to take along as many people as possible while seeking any objective. Furthermore, Ranade was of the opinion that no nation could achieve greatness by completely severing its contacts with its past.

Ranade wanted Indian National Congress to get involved more in the matter of social reform. The leading leaders of the Congress were opposed to this view. For instance, Dadabhai Naoroji disagreed with Ranade on the ground that the Congress was basically concerned with political and economic issues of the nation and it was not a proper forum to take up social reform. Naoroji stated: "A national Congress must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has direct participation, and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to class congress." It was a typical line of argument of a liberal-constitutionalist leader who did not want to involve a nationalist movement in the contentious area of social reform of religious communities.

#### **4.3.1 Check Your Progress:**

1. Critically discuss the social ideas of M. G. Ranade.

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2. Evaluate the contribution of M .G. Ranade to Indian social reform movement.

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#### **4.4. POLITICAL LIBERALISM:**

Political liberalism is characterised by individual freedom, equality and a form of government that should not only have the backing of the people but should also be engaged in the moral development of the people. Ranade was an unfaltering supporter of all these ideals. We must admit that Ranade did not produce a liberal theory of the state or of individual freedom. However, on the basis of his political essays, speeches and commentaries we can procure a coherent account of his notions on freedom, equality and the end of the state that seem to be attuned with political liberalism.

Ranade's point of view in respect with freedom or individual freedom was a spin-off of his metaphysical worldview. He believed that freedom was a boon of God given to the individual to distinguish between good and evil and applying his free mind choose the good to guide his soul to salvation. Man's conscience, asserted Ranade, was the channel through which God's command got conveyed to him and not through the priests. Thus, Ranade recognised the predominance of individual's freedom and the authority of her conscience. Ranade followed Emmanuel Kant to delineate the concept of freedom as freedom of the moral will and argued that man alone was endowed with the capability of freedom because he alone could choose between right and wrong. Ranade defined freedom as a responsibility to obey the voice of God that could be discerned in our conscience. In this sense, Ranade, had a distinctive view of freedom that was different from the normal inference of the concept that would give free choice to a man to act as per his desire. In Ranade's view freedom appeared to be a command to follow our higher nature by shunning the desires of lower nature. Ranade seemed to borrow this notion of freedom from Kant who defined freedom as the right to yearn for a self-imposed constraint of duty.

Ranade pointed out that we could be really free when we would ourselves make the conscious decision to abide by our real or higher

self and ignore the demands of our lower self. He further added that a free individual would only submit to her conscience and never compromise on her inner self for political expediency, social pressure or other external forces such as customs, scriptures or conventions. Ranade clarified that all persons had the right to enjoy freedoms and, therefore, the freedom of an individual should not result in the denial of freedom to another individual. He justified the existence of state and society only because these institutions helped people enjoy the moral freedom. The state had to create the suitable conditions by making reasonable laws and appropriate political institutions in which individual would feel free as per the directives of her conscience. Similarly, freedom in the context of society implied that an individual had the freedom to lead life in accordance with the promptings of her conscience.

Ranade's concept of equality was also a product of his religious worldview. His main thrust in defining equality was his belief that God created all human beings and for all human there was only one God. On this premise Ranade argued that all men were equal as they all possessed the common bond of divinity with God. Moreover, all men were equal also because it was God that endowed all men with a divine force such as conscience. His concept of equality owed much to the Bhakti movement that had condemned the hierarchical stratification of Hindu society based on caste. Bhakti movement preached equality of all human beings and proclaimed that every person could realise God by the way of bhakti or devotion to God. The saints of Bhakti movement popularised the notion of equality and dignity of men by rejecting the Brahminic view that the social status of a person depended on her birth. Ranade was an ardent admirer of the Bhakti cult and he too rejected caste system that was the major hurdle in India in the realisation of the concept of equality.

Ranade also advocated the notion of gender equality. His extensive research in the field of ancient Hindu norms, customs and beliefs made him realise that in the Vedic period there was complete equality of sexes as women were allowed to participate in religious rituals and political affairs of the state along with men. According to him among the Aryans man and woman treated as equal partners at the time of marriage and the practice of Swayamvara was an indicator of a woman's freedom to select a husband of her choice. He further commented that a Brahmin woman in the Vedic period was even allowed to lead a life of spinster, if she so desired and the society would not look down upon her. In Rakhmabai case he sided with her stand to refuse to live with her husband. His opinion was that marriage law was applicable equally to man and woman but in practice it usually

favoured man. Hindu scriptures, as per his understanding, supported gender equality.

Ranade's political liberalism was also reflected in his notion of state, its nature and the purpose for which it came into being. He argued that the need of the state arose when society realised that it could not work effectively on its own. Society did not have coercive powers to implement its will. Therefore, state was created with collective will of society and it was also endowed with the coercive power that it exercised through its agency, the government. Ranade believed that in the institution of state the power and wisdom of the people got organised. He emphasized that the institution of state represented the power, wisdom, mercy and charity of its people. Additionally, the state's purpose was to create such conditions that make a man happier, nobler, richer and perfect being in every sense. Ranade also favoured the expansion of state's functions. He suggested that state should make laws pertaining to workers, for the control of production of goods, for extending support to new industries, for the establishment of state controlled farms and state industries and banks.

Ranade's contribution to social reforms and disseminating liberal ideas among the Indian educated classes in the second half of the nineteenth century was extremely significant. He was among the first graduates of India. Then he also acquired his masters and law degrees. At the same time he was well versed in ancient scriptures of India. Since he was an avid student of history, he could compare the relative benefits that the people of India enjoyed at different stages in history. He had praised Shivaji's administration because it had brought benefits not only to the upper crust of Indians but also to the masses. After that he appreciated most policies of the British Raj as they were aimed at the progress and welfare of common people of India. He was, in particular, a passionate supporter of the educational system of the British through which socio-economic and political development of India and its people. He was himself the finest example of what a sound education could do to a member of the orthodox Hindu family. He had acquired mastery over the socio-political and legal ideas of the West but did not lose touch either with his religion or intellectual-cultural heritage.

He was among the most fervent supporters of social reform. The methods that he recommended for social reform were also commendable. He wanted that the reformers should refrain from antagonizing the orthodox sections of Hindu society. Instead they should adopt the method of persuasion to bring about social reform. Ranade's metaphysical worldview guided him to take up the cause of reform by appealing the conscience of the individual. Conscience of a

man, he believed, was the voice of the divinity with which every individual was endowed. Social reformers should make the people listen the voice of the divinity after which even the orthodox persons would be convinced to support reforms. Though he was not averse to the idea of state intervention in matters of social reforms, he recommended it only as the last resort. In case persuasion failed and if the reform pertained to prohibiting a reprehensible socio-religious practice, then the state should make suitable legislation. Many social reformers who followed him benefitted from the methods he suggested for reforming Hindu society.

In the field of politics he was known as the guru of the Moderate leaders of the Indian National Congress. For him the British rule was Providential for India and Indians. He recommended strict constitutional methods for the redress of political grievances and putting forth demands. Though he was a liberal, he advocated expansion of state function in view of India's backwardness. He believed that state could improve industrial, agricultural and even social conditions of India by introducing suitable policies. Most importantly, he championed the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. He was of the view that India could only progress in the real sense if the two major communities of the country got united.

Ranade's socio-economic and political ideas could only be derived from a collection of articles and a volume on Maratha history. Though he was among the earliest liberal thinkers of India, some of his views were not exactly in tune with Liberalism. Most of his ideas such as about state, society, rights etc. owed a lot to his religious worldview. Though Liberalism does not insist that an individual must be an agnostic or atheist, in matters of politics Liberalism stands for separating religion and state. Ranade on the contrary advocated a metaphysical view of the State which was more akin to Hegel's idea of state or the Idealist thought rather than Liberalism. Similarly his views on society and individual were the product of his religious or spiritual world view rather than Liberalism. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Ranade helped flourish progressive and democratic ideas in the Western part of India in the first of the nineteenth century and in that respect his contribution was truly worthwhile.

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#### **4.5 SUMMARY:**

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Ranade was among the earliest liberals in the western region of India. He was among the first graduates of the university of Mumbai. His study of Western liberal ideas, in particular, the writings of J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer, Walter Bagehot et al had moulded his political thought. His ideas were in conformity with the objectives of the INC. He



was not, however, a blind follower of Western liberalism. He attempted to synthesise the best traditions of liberalism with the positive values of Indian thought and culture. Therefore, despite being a liberal he was not in favour of absolute individual freedom. He approved of reasonable restraints and discipline. Similarly he was opposed to radically restrict the role of the state in social and economic spheres. He advocated state intervention in matters of social reform. Likewise, though he supported the institution of private property, he was opposed to *laissez-faire*. He was opposed to concentration of administrative powers and spoke in favour of people's right to elect their representatives. In view of the plural character of Indian society he championed the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. He had a metaphysical view of politics as he believed in Providence i.e. the care of the Almighty in the affairs of the people.

Ranade is rightly regarded the 'political rishi' and one of the most significant social reformers. For bringing about social reforms in Indian society in a concerted and systematic way, he put in a lot of efforts to establish the National Social Conference in 1887 and remained a passionate activist of the organisation until his death in 1901. Though Ranade was opposed to revivalism, he wanted to retain the healthy and positive cultural, philosophical and religious traditions of India. He did not like complete banishment of Indian values. His approach to social reforms can be described as spiritual because for him the ultimate purpose of the reforms should be purification, perfection and liberation of an individual's mind. He suggested 5 methods to bring about social reforms in India. They are; 1) by persuasion; 2) by enlightened interpretation of the ancient texts; 3) by disseminating new moral principles; 4) by helping the reform groups and 5) by state intervention.

Ranade's political liberalism was a spin-off his metaphysical worldview. He regarded freedom as a boon of God. It can never be absolute. He was of the view that an individual should exercise his freedom to distinguish between good and evil and opt for good ideas and action for the salvation of the soul. His view of freedom was obviously similar to that of Kantian view according to which freedom should go along with a self-imposed constraint of duty. Similarly Ranade's concept of equality was also a product of his religious worldview. According to him all men were equal because all were created by God. This view of equality was akin to the concept of equality preached by the Bhakti saints in India. Like the saints, Ranade too condemned social stratification of Indian society based on caste. He was also a passionate supporter of gender equality. In his opinion in the Aryan tradition there was no discrimination based on gender. His notion of State was that the institution was created with the collective

will of the society. He believed that State represented power, wisdom and charity of its people.

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#### 4.6 QUESTIONS

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1. Discuss the liberal political ideas of M. G. Ranade.
2. Critically examine the social and political ideas of M. G. Ranade.

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#### 4.7 SUGGESTED READING

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1. Bipin Chandra (Ed), *Ranade's Economic Writings*, Gyan Books, New Delhi, 1990.
2. Brown D. Mckenzie, *Indian Political Thought: From Ranade to Bhave*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961.
3. Masselos Jim, *Indian Nationalism: An History*, Sterling Press, New Delhi, 1985.
4. Wolpert Stanley, *India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991
5. Ingham, Kenneth, *Reformers in India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1956
6. Tucker, Richard R, *Ranade and the Roots of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974



# 5

## Gopal Krishna Gokhale

### Unit Structure:

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 A Liberal Thinker
- 5.3 A Bridge Between Congress and Government
- 5.4 A Moderate Leader
- 5.5 In the Service of the Nation
- 5.6 Economic Ideas
- 5.7 Critical Assessment
- 5.8 Summary
- 5.9 Question
- 5.10 Suggested Reading

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### 5.1 OBJECTIVES :

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1. To assess the status of Gokhale as a liberal thinker.
  2. To understand Gokhale's position as a bridge between Congress and the Government.
  3. To comprehend Gokhale's contribution to moderate political ideas in the Indian context.
  4. To grasp Gokhale's nationalist ideas.
  5. To figure out Gokhale's economic ideas.
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### 5.1. INTRODUCTION:

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One of the greatest Indian liberal thinkers, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, was born on May 9, 1866, at a serene village called Kotluk, in the Chiplun taluka of Ratnagiri district of the Bombay Presidency. Gokhale showed great promise and intelligence right from his early years. Though not much is known about his earliest years of education, his first school, teachers or friends, it is recorded that he sought his elementary education in Kagal, presently a border town on Maharashtra-Karnataka boundary. Gokhale inherited quite a few values like discipline and strong sense of duty from his family of Chitpavan Brahmins. His parents were not affluent but were also not

destitute. His father, Krishnarao Gokhale shifted from his native village to Kagal as he got a job of a clerk there. Gokhale's father, despite his humble background was conscious enough of the changing socio-political scenario of India and for that reason he enrolled young Gopal in an English medium school that imparted the kind of modern education made available by the British in India. It proved decisive in influencing his ideas and activities in later years.

When he completed his elementary education, Gopal along with his brother was sent to Kolhapur for further studies. When he was 13 year old and still in a school in Kolhapur his father died. It was because of the pressure of his elder brother Govind and uncle Anantji that Gokhale had to marry even before he could complete matriculation. He passed his matriculation examination when he was 15, a comparatively young age to complete school education in those days. Gokhale had intense desire to seek higher education but he was also aware of the precarious financial position of his elder brother and other relatives He had no intention to put further pressure on them by expressing his wish to go to college, Besides, he had to look after his wife. In the circumstances he made up his mind to find out some job and start earning himself. However, his brother did not allow him to discontinue his education and prevailed upon him to acquire higher education. Accordingly, in the beginning of 1882, Gokhale joined Rajaram College at Kolhapur. Though he was not known as a brilliant student of the college, he could acquire the reputation of a student with exceptional memory. He was also good at the usage of English language. On completing his first year B.A. he moved to Elphinstone College, Bombay from where he ultimately completed his graduation.

The completion of college education threw open quite a few options before him. He could have enrolled for a masters course, could have joined the law education and become a lawyer or he could even make attempt to clear the I. C. S. examination and become a bureaucrat. He also had the desire to become an engineer as mathematics was one of his subjects in the under graduation course. With much reflection and consultation, he ultimately decided to go for the legal profession because law in those days was a much sought after education. Since, by nature he was a man of strong commitment and had a sense of duty towards his family members who had greatly sacrificed to send him to college, he decided to share the financial burden of his elder brother as well. He sought admission for the law course in the Deccan College, Poona and simultaneously started working as a teacher in the New English School. Though he passed the first year examination of law, he could not continue his law education for financial constraint.

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## 5.2. A LIBERAL THINKER:

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Mahadev Govind Ranade, the political guru of Gokhale was a great admirer of classical liberal thought that flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England in particular and other parts of Europe in general. Gokhale too got attracted to the politics of liberalism. Nevertheless, the liberal ideas of both Ranade and Gokhale were not absolutely identical to those propounded in British liberalism. It was natural because of tremendous differences between British and Indian society. Liberalism, as is understood in the western world is essentially about the liberty of the individual. It is the core idea and in all spheres of human activity, social interaction, political institutions, economic activities, culture, religion etc. the solitary point of reference is individual whose ideas, aspirations, feelings and opinions must be respected unconditionally. The political implication of liberalism is of course the establishment of a liberal democracy based on universal adult franchise with secularism as the operating principle. The extreme example of economic liberalism is *laissez faire* or free market economy. In such a system state is not allowed to regulate let alone control the economic activities.

The liberal ideas of Gokhale were slightly different from the British classical liberalism. He was not in favour of giving unbridled freedom to individual that, he feared, might lead to chaos or social upheaval. He respected discipline and order. He did not believe that liberty essentially meant absence of restraints. He prescribed that each individual should have a positive/ constructive purpose in his life that could only be accomplished with discipline, self-restraint. In politics, Gokhale believed that liberal ideas should be realized in India gradually. For that reason throughout his political career he kept appealing to the British to establish representative institutions and let them function freely to manage public affairs of India. However, Gokhale did not favour the principle of universal adult franchise. He was in favour of property qualification for the enjoyment of political rights. In case of Panchayat elections too Gokhale recommended that the right to vote should be made available to those who paid revenue. These ideas were the complete negation of the western ideology of liberalism. He, nonetheless, was completely in favour of the freedom of the Press and for that reason he opposed the Amendment Bill in 1904 that aimed to include even civil matters in Official Secrets Act. Gokhale wanted to establish a political order that should reflect the social reality of India. He, therefore, emphasized the need of communal harmony and for the sake of ensuring Muslim representation he even gave his consent to communal electorates.

In the field of economy too his ideas were in variance with classical liberalism. Though Gokhale supported the institution of private property, he did not believe in absolute restriction on state to intervene in economic activities. His argument was that for an industrially backward country like India it would be only through State intervention the industrial revolution would take place. Additionally, he demanded that the British Government should utilize the revenue surpluses to create industrial jobs and other employments to remove mass poverty from the country. Similarly, Gokhale approved of state intervention in the area of social reforms. He pleaded with the British rulers to make suitable laws to prohibit unhealthy and superstitious practices of Indian society. This, in fact, was one of the major controversial points between Tilak and Gokhale.

### **5.2.1 Check Your Progress:**

1. Elucidate Gokhale's contribution to liberal political ideas in the context of India.

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2. Make a critical assessment of Gokhale's political liberalism.

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## **5.3 A BRIDGE BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE GOVERNMENT:**

Gokhale got increasingly involved in spreading education among Indian as he believed modern education would truly free Indian society from many socio-economic evils. He became the life member of Deccan Education Society. While working for the Society he had the good fortune of coming into contact with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Agarkar, the great patriots who had influenced the thinking of Gokhale a great deal. Among the two it was Agarkar who left an indelible mark on the ideas of Gokhale. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1889 under the patronage of another renowned social reformer,

Mahadev Govind Ranade. In those days the major issue before the Indian National Congress was to seek greater representation for Indians in positions of power and public affairs. The other Congress leaders of the time such as Tilak, Dadabhai Naoroji, Bipin Chandra pal, Lala Lajpat Rai et al were passionately striving to empower Indians. Though they had differences among themselves in terms of strategy to achieve the desired objectives, they were all committed patriots. Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Pal wanted to adopt more assertive and agitational methods to force the British colonialists to concede the genuine demands of the Indians while Gokhale along with Naoroji and some other leaders favoured a moderate and conciliatory strategy to realize their objectives. This created a kind of rift between these prominent leaders of the Congress that was to come in the open in later years.

In 1891-92, the British Imperial Government introduced the Age of Consent Bill. It was about raising the marriageable age of Indians and do away with the social evil of child marriage. Gokhale who was keen to bring about progressive social reforms in Indian society wholeheartedly favoured the proposed law. This led to the first major confrontation between Gokhale and Tilak. The Bill in itself did not recommend any radical change in the institution of marriage in India. It merely recommended to increase the marriageable age from ten to twelve. However, Tilak had serious objection to it. Though Tilak did not have reservation about the elimination of child marriage, his objection was to the idea of the British Government taking the initiative to introduce reforms in matters which he considered to be embedded in Hindu traditions. He thought it to be uncalled for interference in Hindu social order. For Tilak political independence of the country and empowerment of Indians were more pressing objectives. On social reforms his opinion was that an imperial foreign power had no business to initiate the process of social reform of Hindu society. The Indian would themselves do that on becoming the political masters of the land and affairs. For Gokhale the two objectives, social reforms and political independence were of equal importance and he believed that there was nothing wrong in struggling for both simultaneously. The differing positions of these two prominent leaders of the Congress created much bitterness in their relationship that became more intense when the Age of Consent Bill became the law in Bombay Presidency.

In 1903, he became the member of the Imperial Council of India. He once again proved his worth as an impressive speaker and a knowledgeable legislator while deliberating on an Amendment Bill that was introduced with the purpose of altering the Official Secrets Act of 1889, so that civil matters too should be included in its ambit along with the military matters that were already covered by the original Act. It was a blatant anti-people endeavor by the British bureaucracy to deny

the people every kind of information that they should have access to. In his characteristic gentle manner Gokhale appealed to the members of the Imperial Council to take into cognizance the public outcry against the proposed amendment and refrain from passing the Bill. Nevertheless, the Bill was passed and Gokhale while intervening later in the discussion sadly observed that in the entire British Empire nowhere the Government was as powerful as it was in India. He also pointed out that nowhere in the Empire the press was so weak to influence the decision making process of the Government as it was in India. In fact the Indian press, he continued, should have been given a helping hand by the Legislature but on the contrary the law making wing had unfortunately armed the Government with more powers that it would use to suppress the freedom of the press.

Gokhale's commitment to liberalism and his politics of Moderation did attract the attention of Gandhi who was then struggling in South Africa for ensuring a dignified existence for all races in general and for the Indian indentured labourers in particular. Gandhi wanted to draw attention of the important members of the Indian National Congress to the valiant efforts of the Natal Indian Congress that was agitating against the inhuman, racist policy of the colonial Government of South Africa for the sake of hapless labourers who were denied even the rights of settlers in that country. It was Gandhi who prompted Gokhale take up the issue of Indian labourers of South Africa. Gokhale, therefore, moved resolutions on two occasions, in 1910 and 1912, in the Imperial Legislative Council wherein he strongly recommended that the colonial Government should mete out a just and humane treatment to the indentured labourers of Indian origin and grant to them the rights of the settlers. On Gandhi's invitation Gokhale visited South Africa and saw for himself the precarious condition of the Indian labourers. The following year he started a movement to raise funds for the financial support of South African Satyagrah Movement. Though Gokhale did not live long to support Gandhi's struggle, he tremendously impressed Gandhi by his brand of politics, dedication to the cause of nation building and social reforms and above all his strict sense of discipline. In later years Gandhi adopted some of the ideas of Gokhale. Though Gandhi cannot be called a Moderate, he was closer to the political style of Gokhale's leadership. Gandhi respected Gokhale so much that he called him his political guru.

Gokhale was extremely concerned about the increasing resentment against the Government in the aftermath of partition of Bengal. He feared that any violent agitation on the issue would bring about lots of hardships for the common people and their process of progress would be put off indefinitely. His main aim at that time was to ease the surcharged atmosphere by drawing the attention of the



Government to take some necessary measures to attend to various problems of the people. With this intension in 1906, he placed before the Imperial Legislative Council a Seven-point Scheme that according to him would ensure the moral and material uplift of the people of India. The seven points were: (i) the reduction of the state demand upon land, especially in U.P., Bombay and Madras so that some relief might be provided to the agricultural depression that was then prevalent; (ii) to rescue the farmers from the burden of crushing debts; (iii) the establishment of Agricultural Banks like the one introduced in Egypt; (iv) promotion of irrigation and scientific agriculture; (v) promotion of agricultural and technical education; (vi) making available free primary education all across the country and (vii) to foster sanitary improvement. As is obvious that all these measure were mainly related to agricultural and educational advancement of the Indians and there was no mention of any political demand in the Scheme. However, it was a deliberate strategy Gokhale adopted to get the British rulers engaged in the material and educational advancement of the people of India through which he was hoping to pacify incensed feelings of his countrymen.

Thus, all through the years he was associated with the Government, he worked passionately to influence the British decision makers to make available greater degree of freedom to his countrymen and also made valiant efforts to impress upon the foreign rulers to let more and more Indians be involved in public affairs of the country. He made good use of his command over the English language and impressed the British by his knowledge that he displayed while taking part in the deliberations particularly those which pertained to budgetary provisions. This reputation earned him an invite to London by the Secretary of State Lord John Morley. Gokhale and Morley developed mutual liking for each other and it was because of the warm affinity between the two that helped Gokhale to somewhat influence the framing of Morley-Minto Reforms that were introduced in 1909.

Gokhale did also succeed in leaving his impression as a committed member of the Congress and as an able leader to guide not only the rank and file but also the prominent leaders of the organization. In the Madras session of the Indian National Congress held in 1903, Gokhale was elected as Joint General Secretary. In a speech made in Madras in 1904, he exhorted Indians to emulate the patriotic streak and sense of discipline of the Japanese that helped them to emerge as an industrial power. He hoped that if Congress continued to impart political education to more and more people, India would soon become a self-governing part of the British Empire. He insisted that every member of the Congress should be extremely disciplined and be dedicated to participate in the political life of the

country. He observed that the political struggle was becoming sharper and that made it necessary for every responsible Indian perform his political duty with greater sense of responsibility and discipline. He wanted to increase the number of political activists so that every province would have sufficient number of devoted persons to take part in public affairs.

The closer Gokhale went to the British the farther he went from the fiercely patriotic Indians who were favouring a confrontationist line of action against the British to promote and protect the interests of Indians. They were also seeking a great deal of freedom for their countrymen. The most prominent among the leaders who opposed Gokhale's line of action was of course Tilak. The year (1905) the British divided Bengal to broaden the gulf between Hindus and Muslims and continue to rule, Gokhale became the President of the Indian National Congress. The year was also marked by extremely tense political atmosphere in the country. The impending visit of the Prince of Wales created a difficult situation because India in general and Bengal in particular did not have any intention to declare loyalty to the British crown and welcome the visiting dignitary. In his presidential address delivered in the session held at Banaras it was the political acumen of Gokhale that made him explain to Indians the distinction between a party government and position of the Crown and Constitution. He clarified that the Crown represented the non-partisan permanent element of the British political system and therefore, Indians had to show respect to the representative of the Crown. He advised Indians to welcome the Prince because by doing so they would be expressing their loyalty to that source of the British polity which issued Queen's Proclamation, a document that promised Indians rights to freedom and equality within the British Empire.

He also dealt with the issue extending cooperation to the newly appointed viceroy Lord Minto in his presidential address. He hoped that in the changed political set-up the repressive policies of the previous Viceroy, Lord Curzon, would be given up and Indian would extend their fullest cooperation to the government. In this manner he proved to be a bridge between the people of India and the British rulers. His conciliatory gesture made the new Viceroy to adopt a responsive position that was very helpful during the extended negotiations about the future reforms to be introduced in India.

The one factor that had vitiated the political climate of India in the year 1905 and thereafter was the partition of Bengal. The people in Bengal had adopted the policy of boycott. Gokhale had to take a clear stand on the issue. He clarified his position by stating that the people

had opted for this extreme strategy of boycott to achieve a two-fold objective. Firstly, they were giving expression to their deep resentment against the shabby treatment with which they were being treated. Secondly, they were hoping to attract the attention of responsible and judicious people of England so that they in turn would ask the authorities responsible for Indian affairs to attend to the grievances of Indians. Gokhale made it absolutely clear that in those circumstances people were completely justified to resort to the strategy of boycott. He, however, cautioned the people that the strategy of boycott should be resorted to only in extreme situations because there were risks involved in case it failed. Though he accepted the efficacy of boycott as a political weapon, he felt that its adoption in 1905 was not necessary from the point of view of need and efficacy.

The eminent position of the President of the Congress provided Gokhale an opportunity to oppose Tilak's brand of politics and thus undermine his stature within the organization. At the extremity of his Presidency, Gokhale refused to endorse the candidature of Tilak for the President of the Congress in 1905. There were serious ideological differences between these two prominent freedom fighters as they belonged to the two antagonistic factions of the Congress. Gokhale, unlike the Extremists, gave priority to social reforms and spread of education. His line of argument was "first deserve then desire" and his ultimate political objective was "a self-governing India within the Empire." Addressing a gathering of the Congress workers he had clarified his political goals. He said: "I recognize no limits to my aspiration for our motherland. I want my people to be in their own country what other people are in theirs. I want our men and women without distinction of caste or creed to have opportunities to grow to the full height of their stature unhampered by cramping and unnatural restrictions. I want India to take her proper place among the great nations of the world, politically, industrially, in religion, in literature, in science and in arts. I want all this and feel at the same time that the whole of this aspiration, in its essence and its reality, will be realized within this Empire."

In pursuing the policy of cooperation with the Government, Gokhale wanted to influence the British rulers to accelerate and enlarge the official policy of liberalization and democratization of the political institutions of India. In this context he submitted a note to the Royal Commission on Decentralization wherein he clarified that unless the process of decentralization was accompanied by the measure of political popularization governments the goal of genuine democratic decentralization would not be achieved. Under the façade of the

decentralization of powers the British rulers actually wanted to devolve more powers to the Provincial Governments so that they could suppress the popular uprisings. Gokhale was perceptive enough to see through the British plan and for that reason raised the issue of increasing popular representation in the Provincial Governments. He favoured decentralization of powers because centralization of powers, ore often than not, resulted in the autocratic rule. At the same time he, however, insisted on democratization of the political institutions in the Provinces. He was convinced that decentralization could be effective only if the membership of the provincial council was increased and they were empowered to discuss the budget.

He did not stop only at the provincial level while recommending decentralization and democratization but went further in suggesting that this process should also be extended to District Administration in two ways. As per his proposal the District Local Boards should be truly representative by democratizing them so that they could perform their function more effectively. Secondly, the Collector or Commissioner responsible for performing their functions as representatives of the Provincial Government should do so in consultation with the Advisory Council that should also be majorly constituted on democratic principle. While appearing before the Hobhouse Decntralization Commission in 1908, Gokhale presented his idea of local self government that consisted of three layers of authority, i) village panchayats at the bottom, ii) district councils at the intermediate level, and iii) reformed legislative councils at the top. He persisted with his scheme of administrative reforms whenever he got the opportunity to give expression to constitutional reforms.

Contrary to this strategy, the Extremist leaders such as Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurobindo et al were striving to achieve Swaraj as they believed it was their natural right. The Extremist leaders also rejected the Western idea of nation and aimed at establishing a nation that would be based on spiritual character of Indian traditions. On the issue of social reforms the Extremists suggested that on achieving political freedom the Indian themselves would bring about suitable reforms in Indian society and the foreign rulers had no business to interfere in socio-cultural traditions of Indians. The two factions of the Congress failed to reconcile their differences and consequently the Congress split between the Moderates and Extremists in 1907 at the time of the Surat session. The two factions could bury their differences only in 1916 when Gokhale was no more alive.

### 5.3.1 Check Your Progress:

1. How far Gokhale was successful in serving as a bridge between the Government and the Congress?

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2. Discuss the impact of Gokhale's proximity with the Government on our freedom movement.

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## 5.4. A MODERATE LEADER:

Gokhale did not consider the British rule as something terribly evil for India. He, therefore, was not primarily concerned about the independence of the country. In fact he was more passionate about social reforms that he believed could be smoothly brought about with the spread of education. He belonged to the Moderate wing of the Congress whose political ideology was popularly defined as politics of moderation in relation to the British rule in India. Gokhale along with other moderate colleagues of the Congress such as Surendranath Bannerjee, Phirozshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji had always tried to convey to the foreign rulers that the Congress had complete faith in the British sense of justice and their organization (Congress) would always function as a communication channel informing the rulers about the aspirations and expectations of the people. The Moderates would frequently express their loyalty to the British Crown and English Constitution and the Congress was only helping the British rulers by exposing the misdeeds of the bureaucracy and the Anglo-Indian personnel who were part of it. More often than not they would impress upon the British rulers that Congress was not a seditious organization but it was performing a significant duty by explaining the policies of the Government to the people and at the same time informing the

authorities about the genuine grievances of the people. Gokhale also believed that the project of social reforms would be effectively executed by co-operating with the British rulers and making the effective use of government institutions. This particular line of strategy incensed the intensely patriotic leaders such as Tilak, Pal et al who started open opposition to Gokhale and his mission. Nevertheless, Gokhale refused to alter his political stance and continued to seek co-operation of the British rulers to accomplish the cause of spreading education and reforming Indian society.

Like, Ranade, who was his political guru, Gokhale sincerely believed that it was the wisdom of Providence that had established the British connection with India. He was totally convinced in holding the view that some kind of benevolent power was guiding the life of the people of the world. He was of the opinion that wisdom and benevolence were the characteristics of the Providence Gokhale in the tradition of Ranade made sincere attempts to rationalize the perception that the coming of the British was a benevolent event for India. Like Ranade, he too held the view that because the British introduced in India the modern education of science and technology that helped develop an industrial culture in some pockets of the country. Gokhale also believed that the British brought with them the political value of freedom and made Indians aware of the concept of a national state. His admiration for the British was primarily because of the democratic institutions that they had promised to fully introduce in India. He argued that the Indian history could not provide any parallels to the democratic political institutions before the coming of the British. His major political objective was to introduce similar type of representative political institutions in India which had created an atmosphere of freedom and political equality in England and some other European nations. For that reason he attached greater importance to the British rule as, in his estimation, it would be through that connection India would become a genuine democratic nation. Though, some of his pro-British ideas could be contested, it was a historical fact that the freedom struggle of India was a spin-off of the British rule.

In spite of being a member of the Moderate faction of the Congress, Gokhale never lost the opportunity to criticize a policy of the Government if it appeared unjust or anti-people to him. The two prominent examples were his criticism about salt tax and the excise duty on cotton goods. He also did not mince words while opposing the

unjust policies of Lord Curzon's administration. He frequently criticized the British policy makers for their failures to introduce British parliamentary institutions in India. He was invited to London to give evidence before the Welby Commission that was inter alia investigating the impact of economic status of Indians. Gokhale made maximum use of the opportunity by giving expression to his ideas about the poverty of Indians, the industrial policy, forest laws and many other socio-economic issues that were prominent at that time. For him the Congress was not an exclusively political organization but the one that also took care of the social and cultural issues of Indians. He therefore desired to have a genial rapport between the Congress and the British rulers for the sake of promoting welfare programmes for the countrymen. Like all Moderate leaders he never nursed the idea of getting rid of the yoke of British imperialism but always strived to increase the number of Indians in public services and in positions of responsibilities. He believed that the interest of Indians could be better protected by increasing cooperation between Indian and the Government.

Gokhale's position of collaboration with the British became more pronounced when he became the member of the Bombay Legislative Council in 1899. Though he remained the member of the Council only for two years, his impressive performance as a legislator was appreciated by all. One of his important speeches in the Bombay Legislative Council was in regard with the Mofussil Municipalities Bill wherein he expressed his views on Municipal government as well as on the issue of communal electorates that was part of the Bill. He underlined the significance of local government, for through it local problems could be better attended to and local progress could be made. Moreover, he pointed out that people of different faiths, castes and social strata could get opportunity in the local government to work together in the spirit of cooperation. The nature of local self-government, he explained, did not contain anything in it that could give rise to conflict between various sections of society. He did recognize the plural character of Indian society by pointing out that even the Hindu community could not be treated as a single category for it was divided in various castes and sub-castes. He observed that in such a situation the government could not make provisions for each and every community. He, therefore, suggested sticking to the concept of common electorates. Unfortunately this sound advice was not heeded

to by the majority of the Council and the consequent Municipal Act did make provision for communal electorates.

In the Congress session held at Banaras Gokhale presented a set of nine demands that together represent the essence of the political philosophy of the Indian Moderates. Those nine demands were: 1) a reform of the legislative councils by raising the proportion of elected members of one-half , and by providing that the budgets be passed by the councils; 2) the appointments of at least three Indians to the India Council; 3) the creation of advisory boards in all districts throughout the country. It must be made obligatory that the district magistrates were to consult these boards in important matters of administration; 4) the recruitment to the judicial branch of the Indian civil service from the ranks of the legal profession; 5) the separation of judicial and executive administration; 6) the reduction of the ever increasing military budget; 7) the expansion of Primary education; 8) the growth and extension of industrial and technical education and 9) the mitigation of rural indebtedness.

As a Moderate leader he desired the British should take immediate cognizance of the above mentioned demands and for his Congress colleagues he advised to keep pressing for the implementation of these reasonable claims through constitutional methods. He also pleaded with the British authorities to make provisions for the utilization of surplus revenue for the material and moral uplift of the masses. In 1911, he gave expression to what he meant by the moral and material improvement of the people. He submitted that the Government could be judged on the basis of four tests to conclude whether it was working for the uplift of the people or not. Said he: "By measures for the moral and material improvement of the people, I mean what the Government does for education, what the Government does for sanitation, what Government does for agricultural development and so forth; that is my first test. The second test that I would apply is what steps the Government takes to give us a large share in the administration of our local affairs\_\_in municipalities and local boards. My third test is what voice the Government gives us in its Councils\_\_in those deliberative assemblies, where policies are considered. And, lastly, we must consider how far Indians are admitted into the ranks of the public service." History is witness to the fact that the British rulers did fail all the four tests Gokhale prescribed for the



evaluation of the performance of the Government. This, nevertheless, did not dissuade him to give up the politics of Moderation.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Describe the role of Gokhale as one of the leading moderate leaders of Indian political movement.

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2. Critically examine Gokhale's moderate political ideas.

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## **5.5. IN THE SERVICE OF THE NATION:**

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Gokhale never lost sight of social reforms and the cause of spreading modern education among Indians. Even his close associations with the British rulers and his engagements as legislator did not let his mind waver from the main task of nation building. When he became President of the Indian National Congress he was at the height of his popularity and commanded the respect from many sections of Indian society. He had already got associated with the Deccan Education Society when he was still a student of law in Poona. He had also served as the secretary of the Sarvajanik Sabha and worked as the principal of Fergusson College. Since those early ventures in the cause of nation building and education he never neglected the cause of education. His position of prominence in 1905 gave him a golden opportunity to undertake the project of spreading education in a well organized manner. With this purpose in mind, he established the Servants of India Society in the same year he became the President of the Congress. Gokhale was firmly convinced that true political freedom in India would not come unless its people got political education. He was also aware of the fact that most of the existing educational institution did not make provision for political education of

the people. The Society thus aimed to spread education among the people in such manner that they would gain political education as well that might enable them to perform their civil and patriotic duties.

The Preamble to the Constitution of the Servants of India Society provided: "The Servants of India Society will train men prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit, and will seek to promote, by all constitutional means, the national interests of the Indian people." It further stated: "The Servants of India Society will train men, prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit and will seek to promote by all constitutional means, the national interests of the Indian people. Its members will direct their efforts principally forward: (i) creating among the people, by example and by precept, a deep and passionate love of the motherland, seeing its highest fulfillment in service and sacrifice, (ii) organizing the work of political education and agitation and strengthening the public life of the country, (iii) promoting relations of cordial goodwill cooperation among the different communities, (iv) assisting educational movements, especially those for the education of women, the education of backward classes, and industrial and scientific education, and (v) the elevation of the depressed classes."

He sincerely believed that with the spread of modern education, the future generations of Indians would become really worthy citizens of India who would be patriotic enough to perform their social and political duties more efficiently. He also believed that the spread of modern, scientific education would also accelerate the process of social reforms. Under his able leadership the volunteers of the Servants of India Society did commendable works such as establishment of schools, making available mobile libraries and arranging night teaching classes for factory workers. Gokhale was well aware of the socio-economic conditions of the people of his countrymen. The hardships of the teeming masses struggling to survive in the face of abject poverty, disease and illiteracy enormously disturbed him and he came to the conclusion that such ills and evils of mammoth proportion could only be eradicated with a large band of dedicated social workers attached to a self-service organization. These volunteers should be committed to the cause of social service and be ready to sacrifice their personal comforts for the cause of the uplift of poor masses. He issued appeals to the privileged sections of Indian society to join the Servants of India Society in order to extend a helping hand to the destitute of the country.

Gokhale was conscious of the difficulties that he was going to face while executing his project of nation building. In his words, "Nation building is nowhere an easy task. In India it is beset with difficulties which are truly formidable and which will tax to the utmost all our

resources and all our devotion. Let us not forget that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small, and our disappointments frequent and trying...We of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures." In this manner he advised the potential social worker to be prepared for failures and disappointments but should continue in their mission because it would be only through failures they might experience successes.

In a speech delivered at a college in Madras he reiterated his firm belief that the future of India depended on the spread of higher education throughout the lengths and breadths of the country. He pointed out that the resources of no Government however liberally spent could be sufficient to overcome the huge deficit in the area of higher education. He urged the students of the college to come forward and help their less-privileged countrymen to seek education. He informed them that there was lot of work they could do for the welfare of their motherland. He called upon the educated Indians to eradicate ignorance and superstitions, elevate the status of women by bringing them in large numbers in the field of education, make more and more Indians aware of political issues, contribute in the industrial development of the country. Gokhale knew it well that all educated Indians would not heed to his call of nation building but he hoped that a fair proportion of the highly educated Indian would join in his efforts. The Servants of India Society did attract many selfless and dedicated workers who played a pivotal role in improving the socio-economic conditions of countless Indians. More importantly the Society inspired many others to dedicate themselves to participate in the process of nation building.

In another speech delivered at Lucknow, Gokhale welcomed the Swadeshi movement that would help Indian industries develop. In his perception Swadeshi represented an intense feeling of love towards the motherland. In his presidential address in the Benaras session of the Congress he said that Swadeshi was not merely an economic movement but also a patriotic one. For him the idea of Swadeshi or 'the self rule' was one of the noblest principles that could inspire the people to make sacrifices for their nation. Gokhale pointed out that the Swadeshi movement stirred the imagination of the people in many ways. In his words, "it (the Swadeshi movement) turns their thoughts to their country, accustoms them to the idea of voluntarily making some sacrifice for her sake, enables them to take an intelligent interest in her economic development and teaches them the important lesson of cooperating with one another for a national end." He, nevertheless, was not in favour of a general boycott of the foreign goods. He cautioned his countrymen that India's industrial progress would be

slower than the expectations of the people but if the patriotic Indians worked with sincerity and dedication no obstacles could slow down the pace of progress. In view of the imminent Reforms that were to be announced in 1909, Gokhale advised his countrymen to focus attention on political issues. The industrial issues would naturally follow them.

Gokhale was a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity which he considered absolutely necessary in the process of nation building in a country like India. He was aware of the disparities in the levels of development between the Hindus and the Muslims and for that reason exhorted the Hindus to extend a helping hand to those communities, in particular, the Muslims who lagged behind in socio-economic development. At the same time he impressed upon the British rulers to recognize the importance of the Hindus and treat them accordingly. He also expected from the Muslims to shun their prejudices against the majority community and join in the process of social assimilation and contribute to the social, political and economic advancement to make India a great nation.

The controversial issue in those days was that of communal electorates that was cunningly devised by the British to keep the two major communities divided. The rise of Muslim separatism, in particular, in the first decade of the twentieth century was an off-shoot of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. First it was partition of Bengal in 1905 and then the following year the Muslim League was established with full approval of the British. The institutionalization of communalism was first done in the Morely-Minto Reforms of 1909 that provided for communal electorates. Though Gokhale did not approve of mixing religion and politics he reluctantly accepted communal electorates. He, however, made it clear that this practice should be limited only for the Muslim community and this divisive should not be extended any further. In the context he submitted a note to the Secretary of State wherein he suggested: "To throw open a substantial minimum of seats on a territorial basis, in which all qualified to vote should take part without distinction of race or creed. And then supplementary elections should be held for the minorities which, numerically or otherwise, are important enough to need special representation; these supplementary elections should be confined to the minorities only." His sound advice was ignored by the British as in the subsequent Reforms they kept extending the communal electorates to other religious and caste communities as well. However, Gokhale was no more alive to criticize the mischievous policies of the Government. At the fag-end of his life Gokhale in consultation with Pherozeshah Mehta and the Aga Khan formulated a scheme to make India a truly federal state. In this connection he rejected Aga Khan's suggestion for the reorganization of provinces on ethnic lines. However, he consented to recognize the

need of separate and direct representation of the Muslims and a few other minorities. It was because of his untimely death that his noble dream of Hindu-Muslim unity could not be realized. Muhammad Ali Jinnah who later championed the divisive two-nation theory and forced the partition of the country was ironically very close to Gokhale. In fact, Jinnah called him his political guru. Thus, Gokhale enjoyed a unique distinction of being political guru of both Gandhi and Jinnah.

### 5.5.1 Check Your Progress:

1. Assess the significance of the measures that Gokhale adopted in the service of the nation'.

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2. Describe Gokale's contribution to the nationalist ideas in the Indian context.

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## 5.5. ECONOMIC IDEAS:

Among the earliest leaders of the Indian National Congress Gokhale was one of the two stalwarts who consistently spoke on the economic problems of India. The other was Dadabhai Naoroji. If one goes through the speeches he delivered in the Imperial Legislative Council of which he was a member for continuously 13 years (1902-1915), we may appreciate the enormous contribution he made to bring in focus different aspects of Indian economy. For his insightful reviews of India's economic problems and his persistence to improve the economic status of Indians, he not only earned tremendous respect of his Indian colleagues but was also praised by some of the British members of the establishment.

Poverty continues to be the foremost economic problem even in the contemporary times. In the days when Gokhale was active in political affairs it was much more excruciating as the British Raj was

primarily engaged in exploiting the economic resources of India. The masses were living in abject poverty without any hope of relief from the government agencies. Those who were fortunate to be engaged in services or vocations were also not much better off because of high cost of living and ever-increasing taxes. Since the British entered into India as traders, looting of India's material wealth had always remained their principal motive. The position did not change with the end of the East India Company's rule. The British Crown that came to rule over the Indian subcontinent carried on robbing India's material resources to enrich the British industry and at the same time the colonial masters introduced so many restrictions on the indigenous Indian industry that it almost ruined. It was Dadabhai Naoroji who first gave expression to economic drain from India to Britain and thereafter the other Congress leaders reiterated it on and off. Gokhale had taken up the issue with utmost sincerity and for that reason he persisted in speaking on the economic woes of India whenever he got the opportunity.

Added to the British policies of economic exploitation, India also suffered from severe famines during the last three decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The famines in Orissa (1866), in Bihar (1873-74), in Madras and Bombay (1876-78), in almost the entire country in 1896, and in 1900 the famine took half of India into its grip. The unfortunate thing was that the foreign rulers hardly did anything to provide relief to the hungry masses. With the establishment of the Congress in 1885, the Indian leaders got a platform to give expression to their concerns about the economic plight of the Indian people and the state of recession in Indian industry. In the second session of the Congress held at Calcutta, Dadabhai Naoroji, devoted a major portion of his Presidential address to the problem of poverty in India and in the resolution moved to focus on this serious problem, it was said that "this Congress regards with the deepest sympathy, and views with grave apprehension, the increasing poverty of vast numbers of the population of India..."

Speaking in the Imperial Legislative Council on Budget of 1902, Gokhale mainly dealt with the issue of poverty and pointed out that despite the so-called measures taken by the Government to improve the material condition of the people, the mass poverty was on the rise. It was unfortunate that the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, consciously ignored all the reasonable arguments that Gokhale submitted in support of the deepening poverty. Instead he reiterated the official line that the economic condition of the people was improving. Participating in the discussion on Budget in 1903, Gokhale criticized the policy of encouraging the imports of the cotton goods would ultimately destroy the indigenous cotton industry. He also countered Government's position that the increase in revenue was a proof of increasing

prosperity of the Indian people by arguing that a measly increase in revenue was no conclusive evidence of the growing prosperity. He pointed out that a huge increase in death rate because of widespread famine and plague and the consequent destitution of the rural masses were the true indicators of growing poverty.

The search for knowing the causes of Indian poverty had always been a major issue before the Indian intellectuals since the coming of the British. For Naoroji, Indian poverty was the direct result of British rulers of unjust policy of economic drain. His theory was that the foreign rulers were transferring the wealth and natural resources of India to England in order to augment British industry. Then the finished goods from England were allowed to flood Indian markets and almost no import duty was collected on many of these foreign goods. In this manner too India's wealth got transferred to England. Gokhale himself did not say much on the issue of Naoroji's economic drain theory. There is, however, a reference to it in his evidence before the Welby Commission. Gokhale appeared to agree with Naoroji that Indian industries remained stagnant because much of the material resources and capital was taken away from the country. Had the resources and the capital remained in the country, the Indians would have developed the indigenous industry on a much larger scale. In a speech dealing with the Swadeshi Movement in 1907, Gokhale estimated, "the annual cost to India of England's political domination...at 20 crores of rupees... it is incumbent that our men should be employed more and more in the service of the State, so that Pension and furlough charges might be saved to the country." It must be added that the only time Gokhale referred to the economic drain theory was in justification of the Swadeshi Movement.

Gokhale was aware of the ill effects of economic drain on Indian economy but he was also concerned about the socio-political backwardness of Indians that, he believed could be minimized with the continuation of the British rule. He, therefore, chose to overlook the drain theory and instead on various occasions he pleaded with the Government to utilize revenue surpluses for the economic uplift of the Indian masses. It has already been referred to above that in 1906, he suggested seven economic measures to improve the material conditions of the poorer section of Indian society. These measures included, i) cutback on the State demand on land, ii) proper action to free the rural masses from the burden of debts, iii) credit to the farmers on cheaper rate of interests, iv) encouragement of irrigation and scientific agriculture, v) promotion of industrial and technical education, vi) Free and compulsory primary education and vii) Improvement in sanitation. While submitting his seven-point scheme, Gokhale once again appealed to the rulers to utilize revenue surpluses for the

implementation of these measures. Another plea he would often make in his speeches on Budgets was reduction in military expenditure. His argument was that the Indian Government was needlessly maintaining a large army that far exceeded the actual requirements. By reducing the size of the armed forces the money thus saved could be utilized for economic condition of the people. In 1912, he moved a resolution in the Imperial Council pertaining to his pet economic argument that by creation of special provincial reserves by means of grants from the imperial surpluses the economic hardships of the people could be reduced. In the speech he said, "Money is required ...especially for education and sanitation and medical relief...The Government, however, is reluctant to make a large regular allotment out of the current revenues. Therefore, I propose another method which, though not equally satisfactory, will be found to answer the requirements to some extent... I urge that two-thirds of this surplus ...should be placed at the disposal of provincial governments for non-recurring expenditure on the objects I have mentioned." Gokhale in demanding the utilization of revenue surpluses for public welfare was appealing to the liberal and judicious traditions that were constantly, though unfairly, propagated by the British themselves. The British liberal traditions had some meaning in England. In India the British rule for the major part of it only looted the material resources of the country.

To counter this open loot of Indian material resources many early Congress leaders launched on the Swadeshi movement. For instance as early as 1869, Ganesh Vasudeo Joshi, popularly known as Sarvajanik Kaka, started the Swadeshi movement in Poona. Additionally, the ever-increasing population an off-shoot of early marriages was also thought to be one of the causes of poverty. Gokhale's political guru Ranade was deeply concerned with the population increase and as a partial solution he supported emigration of the workers to other parts of the Empire. Though Gokhale was an ardent disciple of Ranade, on the issue of emigration of Indian work force he disagreed with his political mentor. He moved a resolution in the Imperial Council in 1910, with the objective to put to an end the recruitment of indentured labour for South Africa. Thereafter, he visited South Africa on the invitation of Gandhi and subsequently moved another resolution in 1912, for the complete prohibition of recruitment of indentured labour. His opposition to the emigration of Indian workers was because of the sub-human treatment meted out to the indentured labourers in South Africa against which Gandhi fighting against the colonial government. For Gokhale who had seen the perilous conditions of the Indian workers, it was an insult to India's honour to keep sending their countrymen who were being treated worse than animals in the foreign shores.



**Check Your Progress :**

1. Critically examine Gokhale's economic ideas.

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2. How far Gokhale's economic ideas were relevant to the political realities of his times?

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**5.7. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT:**

Gokhale was the product of his time and so were his socio-political ideas. It is true that some of his Congress colleagues notably Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal advocated a more aggressive strategy to compel the British to concede the demands of Indians. Gokhale too was not happy with most of the policies of the British and on countless occasions he demanded that the Government should work for the socio-economic welfare of the people. He, however, was not in favour of adopting a violent or revolutionary method for the sake of fulfillment of his demands. He was a liberal to the core. He was greatly influenced by the thoughts of J. S. Mills and Edmund Burke. In Poona the rationalist and scientific ideas of Agarkar also impacted his socio-political thinking. He had a steady faith in the benevolent nature of the British rule. He was not alone in pursuing this line of action. His political guru M. G. Ranade and many of the earliest Congress leaders such as W. C. Bannerji, Dadabhai Naorji, Badruddin Tyabji, Phirozshah Mehta, Dinshaw Wacha, Motilal Nehru et al did not approve of a confrontationist approach against the British rule. Instead they adopted an approach for the redress of the genuine demands of the people that could be described as gradualism or moderation. For these reasons these leaders came to be described as Moderates. They believed in the constitutional democracy and were wholeheartedly wedded to non-violence.

Gokhale believed in the constitutional methods to put across his political demands before the rulers and appeal to their sense of justice to concede them. He was a great orator and an able legislator. He spent two years in the provincial Legislative Council and almost thirteen years in the Imperial Legislative Council. During this long tenure as legislator he raised almost all the significant issues, social, educational, political and economic in the Councils, suggested the feasible and reasonable alternatives for the resolve of the problems but on very few occasions he met with concrete success. Despite frequent failures to convince the rulers, he never thought of reviewing his political strategy. Not that he had any kind of apprehension to oppose the British. He was very critical of Lord Curzon's administration and he openly criticized partition of Bengal. However, he advised the people to refrain from agitation. Similarly he supported the Swadeshi Movement but disapproved of boycott of foreign goods. He failed to understand that the British were primarily interested in exploiting the wealth and material resources of India for the Progress of England. He was very close to Lord Morley and was also hopeful of Minto's administration. However, when the Morley-Minto Reforms were finally made public in 1909, they fall too short of Indians' expectations. The worst part was that the communal representation, an idea that Gokhale never liked was introduced in the Reforms. At that point of time Gokhale should have rejected the Reforms in no uncertain terms. He did not do that. Instead he reluctantly accepted the principle of Communal representation with a rider that it should be limited only to the Muslims. The glaring contradiction in the thoughts of Gokhale was his opposition to the principle of universal adult franchise which is the soul of representative government. He had always been fighting for the uplift of the poor masses, exhorting his followers to dedicate themselves for the welfare of the downtrodden and the untouchables. However, on the question of political rights he prescribed property and tax paying capacity as the qualification. This only shows that he could not rise above the prejudices of his class.

He was an extraordinary analyst of political economy and his speeches on budgets were excellent. He had a sound understanding of the economic problems of the country and many of his suggestion could have helped Indian economy improve. Nevertheless, the British rulers though praised him for his insight and oratory, did barely give a serious thought to implement his economic measures. In spite of constant rebukes, Gokhale never became disillusioned with the foreign rule. Gokhale was not only a political figure. He was equally committed to social reforms particularly spread of education. In this area he did some commendable work first through the Deccan Education Society and later through the Servants of India Society. These achievements

were without doubt commendable. Nevertheless, he did not make concerted efforts himself to reach to the poorest among the Indian masses. Through his speeches and articles he did guide his volunteers what programmes should be undertaken to make India a great nation but personally he rarely got in touch with the destitute of the country. This was a common weakness of almost all the Moderate leaders who were English educated and mostly urban based intellectuals.

Despite these obvious drawbacks Gokhale was one of the staunchest nationalists who sincerely wanted to transform India into a great nation. Though he belonged to the Moderate school of politicians, he did not lose any opportunity to criticize the unjust policies of the British. On issues like partition of Bengal, communal representation and Swadeshi, Gokhale did speak without reservation. In the Budget debates he was always critical of the economic policies of the Government. Though he was not opposed to Naoroji's economic drain theory, he was more in favour of utilization of the surplus revenue for socio-economic development of India. He had an abiding faith in the enlightened Englishmen's sense of justice and genuinely believed that the ideals contained in the Queen's Proclamation of 1858 such as justice, freedom and self rule within the Empire would be gradually introduced in India. At the same time he, however, bitterly critical of the highhanded attitude of the bureaucracy and the anti-Indian attitude of the Anglo-Indian personnel. He cleverly used his membership of the Imperial Legislative Council in exposing the misdeeds of the British rulers. Lord Curzon whom Gokhale criticized the most had judged the performance of Gokhale in these words: "Mr. Gokhale was a member of my Legislative council...During this time he was, I think, I may almost say, in invariable opposition to the Government. He was if I may describe him, the leader of the Opposition in the Imperial Legislative Council over which I presided." This observation of Curzon proves the point that for Gokhale national interests were of prime importance for which he used his position of a legislator to attack the anti-national policies of the British. It is also an evidence against Gokhale's detractors who would taunt him as the blue-eyed boy of the British.

*The Statesman* was a newspaper published and managed by the pro-British lobby. The newspaper had barely praised any nationalist leader or any work of the Indian National Congress. Its editor, however, paid tribute to Gokhale when he passed away on February 15, 1915, in these words: Mr. Gokhale was the greatest leader that India had ever produced, perhaps her greatest man." Gandhi had always shown utmost respect and regard for him. In fact Gandhi borrowed many of Gokhale's political strategies to fight the British raj. In Gandhi's words: "To see Gokhale at work was as much a joy as an education. He never wasted a minute...All his talk had reference only

to the good of the country...India's poverty and subjection were matters of constant and intense concern to him." No wonder Gandhi proudly called him his political Guru.

Gokhale's significance in the earliest national leaders is also for the fact that he championed the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity at a time when the British were hatching various conspiracies to keep the two communities apart. He got a rousing welcome mostly by the Muslim students when he paid a visit to the Mohammadan-Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh. He firmly believed that communal harmony was one of the essential prerequisites for political freedom of India. Similarly, he was also concerned about the socio-economic plight of the downtrodden sections and untouchables of Indian society and made concerted efforts to uplift them. In the words of Gandhi: "The question of uplifting the 'untouchable' was uppermost in the mind of Gokhale and he initiated and carried on various activities for their welfare. If anyone dared to criticize him for this, he frankly told him that we did not commit sin by touching them but by refusing to touch them." Thus, taking into account the all-encompassing view of Gokhale's thoughts and works we must acknowledge that he was among the foremost nationalists and his contribution in the field of political economy, constitutional reforms, education, social reforms and communal harmony was exceedingly significant.

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## **5.8 SUMMARY:**

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Gokhale was one of the pioneers of liberal political thought in India. However, one must be careful not to confuse his liberal ideas with those of British liberalism wherein individual freedom is considered to be sacrosanct and all spheres of society . social, political and economic have to recognize the principle of Individual liberty. In politics liberal democracy based on the principle of universal adult franchise and in economics laissezfaire are the products of British liberalism. Gokhalke, however, does not believe in absolute freedom of individual. He recommends reasonable restraints and discipline. His idea of representative democracy is also not based on universal adult franchise. He prescribes property as qualification. In the economic sphere too he rejects the idea of absolute free markets. He suggest that considering industrial backwardness of India state should regulate industrial growth and contribute to create industrial employment. Similarly in the fields of education and social reforms Gokhale favours the proactive role of the State.

Gokhale was a respectable member of the INC and at the same time he was an influential member of Imperial Legislative Council. It was because of his knowledge of Indian society and commitment to social reforms, promotion of education, agricultural and industrial growth, freedom of the press and so on he could contribute immensely as a legislator. He was in the true sense a bridge between the aspiration of the INC and the Government. It was because of his efforts many progressive Acts were introduced by the British government. His positive contribution to Indian politics and society impressed Gandhi a great deal and he invited him to South Africa to study the precarious condition of the Indian indentured labourers in that country. Gokhale did raise in the legislature the issue of the plight of Indians in South Africa. Gandhi considered him as his political guru. Gokhale emphasised on social reforms and education more than the political empowerment of Indians. This tendency brought him into conflict with the extremist leaders, in particular, Tilak. However, Gokhale made positive contribution for the progress and welfare of Indians by serving as a bridge between the INC and the Government.

Gokhale being an important leader of the Moderate faction of the INC was more passionate about social reforms to be introduced in Indian society through Government initiatives. He was also an enthusiastic crusader to promote the cause of education among Indians. For him political independence from the British rule was an issue of secondary importance. Like his political guru, Ranade, he too believed that the British rule was a benevolent event for India. It must, however, be pointed out that he was not a blind supporter of the Government. He would criticise the policies of the rulers if they appeared unjust or anti-people to him. As a responsible leader of the INC, Gokhale suggested various measures to make the Government more responsible to the people and as member of the legislature spoke in favour of those measures.

Gokhale's contribution as the nation builder is very significant. From his earliest years of public life he devoted himself to the cause of spreading modern education among Indians. He got associated with the Deccan Education Society and also served as the Principal of the Fergusson College, Poona. He was also active in the Sarvajanic Sabha as its Secretary and in 1905, when he became the President of the INC, he established the Servants of India Society to train Indians who could devote themselves for the service of the nation in all

spheres of life. However, the Society's major contribution remained in the field of education. He was also a supporter of the Swadeshi movement for he believed that through it India would become self-reliant in the field of industry. He was also a staunch champion of Hindu-Muslim unity which he considered to be absolutely necessary for nation building.

Gokhale was one of those rare freedom fighters who had a mastery over Indian economy. Within the sessions of the INC and in the Imperial Legislative Council he consistently spoke on economic issues. After Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale was one who was deeply concerned about economic drain from India to Britain. He correctly analysed that poverty was the most prominent problem of India and for its eradication suggested many suitable reforms in agriculture and industry. In addition to the anti-people policies of the Government, frequent famines were also the contributory factors to add to the economic woes of the masses, Gokhale had always suggested appropriate measures to the Government whenever India faced famine condition. His absolute support to the cause of Swadeshi was also an important action to improve the industrial and economic situation in India.

Gokhale, like many Indian elite, was a product of his time. In the second half of the nineteenth century political ideas of British thinkers like J. S. Mill and Edmund Burke were very popular and Gokhale too came under the spell of those ideas. Among Indians he was influenced by the socio-political and economic thought of Ranade, Agarkar, Dadabhai Naoroji and others. All these influences made him a moderate leader of the INC and like all moderates he was committed to constitutional methods. He was not passionate about the cause of Indian independence because like most moderates he had faith in 'British sense of justice' and considered the British rule as a blessing for India. Such ideas were naturally opposed by the extremist leaders of the INC who gave prominence to Swaraj. One must, however, remember that despite his proximity to the British Government, Gokhale was a nationalist to the core and his contribution as a nation builder cannot be overlooked.

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## 5.9 QUESTIONS

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1. Critically examine political and economic ideas of Gopal Krishna Gokhale.
  2. Describe the role of Gokhale as one of the leading personalities of Indian nationalist movement.
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## 6.10 SUGGESTED READING:

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1. Wolpert Stanley, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1962
2. Masselos Jim, *Indian Nationalism: A History*, Sterling Press, New Delhi, 1985
3. Brown D. Mckenzie, *Indian Political Thought: From Ranade to Bhave*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961
4. J S Hoyland, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, 1933
5. Leadbeater, Tim, *Britain and India: 1845-1947*, Hodder Education, London, 2008
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## Extremism and Political Thoughts of Tilak and Aurobindo

### Unit Structure :

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Split in Congress
- 6.3 Tilak and the Idea of Extremism
- 6.4 Aurobindo's Idea of Extremism
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Question
- 6.7 Suggested Reading

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### 6.0. OBJECTIVES:

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1. To know the circumstances in the history of Modern India when the idea of Extremism in the context of resistance to the British rule got planted. Additionally, to make attempts to define the idea of Extremism.
2. To refer to the ideological differences between the early leaders of the Indian National Congress that ultimately led to its split into two factions that came to be known as Moderate and Extremist.
3. To discuss the Extremist idea in the political thoughts and actions of Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
4. To understand the Extremism of Aurobindo Ghosh.

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### 6.1. INTRODUCTION:

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The clash of Indian and Western civilisations broadly produced two significant responses among the elite in India. The first response that was very much pronounced in eighteenth and nineteenth century Bengal was for assimilation of the best values of the two civilisations and the attempts to reform Indian society in the light of the rational, scientific and liberal British traditions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj best represented the receptive response. The confrontationist response appeared first with revivalist ideology of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and his Arya Samaj Movement. These



earliest elite were for the most part concerned about social reforms and there was barely any political programme that they initiated or supported. The literacy level in their times was also very low. The British model of modern and scientific education was almost non-existent. Technically, a toothless Mughal monarch was still the emperor of India and the all pervading culture throughout the country was feudal.

The uprising of 1857, was the first united assault of the Indians on the foreign rule represented by the East India Company. In the uprising the Indian sepoys irrespective of caste and creed declared their loyalty to Bahadur Shah Zafar and attacked the British wherever they could find them. In Northern and Central India where the fighting was mainly confined along with the Muslim soldiers loyal to Bahadur Shah Zafar, Bakht Khan, Zeenat Mahal, the Maratha rulers such as Nana Saheb Peshwa, Maharani Laxmibai of Jhansi and Nana Saheb's extremely brave commander-in-Chief Tanya Tope bitterly fought against the British. The failure of Indian forces proved a watershed in the modern Indian history as quite a few far-reaching changes happened in the country. Firstly the Mughal rule, that was already in the state of decline for about 150 years, ultimately came to an end; secondly, the rule of the East India Company was also abolished and India came to directly ruled as a colony of the British Crown; thirdly, Queen's Proclamation gave some hope to Indians as it promised the introduction of values such as justice and freedom, universal education and gradual inception representative institutions and lastly as a derivative of modern education the sufficiently qualified and privileged Indians joined hands, albeit on the prompting of a retired British civil servant, A. O. Hume, to establish the Indian National Congress in 1885, that is popularly considered to be the starting point of Indian freedom struggle.

The INC in its formative years acted as a safety-valve between Indians and the British rulers because the bitter experience of 1857, had made the British extra-cautious about public unrest. They, therefore, did not want to be taken off guard again. They expected that the Congress leaders would submit before them the genuine grievances and demands of the Indians in a constitutional manner and the Government would act upon them as per its own wish. Thus the first phase of the Congress (1885-1905) was dominated by the Constitutionalists most of whom were English educated and belonged to the privileged strata of society. They almost had no contact with the teeming masses and abhorred any thought of aggressive or violent agitation against the foreign rule. Though Bal Gangadhar Tilak had welcomed the establishment of the INC, he attended its fifth session held in Bombay in 1889, for the first time. Tilak's speech in that session stunned the audiences comprised of mostly Moderate leaders. Raising

his famous cry, 'freedom is my birth right and I will have it' he went on asking the delegates to change their political strategy and be more assertive. He was obviously in minority in that session of the Congress and continued to be so until 1905.

With partition of Bengal begins the second phase of the Congress that lasted until the death of Tilak in 1920. The Bengalis had launched a movement of boycott against the British in the aftermath of the partition of their province. The bureaucracy resorted to violent actions to suppress the popular movement. A revolutionary Khudiram Bose threw a bomb on a District Magistrate who was particularly very harsh in dealing with the protesters. Thereafter, the Government unleashed a reign of terror on those who dared to protest. Aurobindo Ghosh was arrested and was publicly paraded with handcuffs and a rope fastened to his waist. There was no semblance of rule of law and on mere suspicion people were sent to jail. In the backdrop of such autocratic and totally anti-people actions of the Government Tilak wrote an article in his Marathi weekly, *Kesari*, wherein he expressed: "It is unfortunate that bombs are being made in the country. But the responsibility for creating a situation in which it has become necessary to throw bombs, rests solely on the government. This is due to the government's unjust rule." The Government reacted by arresting and sentencing Tilak for six years imprisonment in exile.

The partition of Bengal gave the opportunity to the fiercely patriotic leaders to come in the limelight. The ideological underpinnings of the revivalist, anti-West social reform movement of Arya Samaj transformed themselves in the extremist, aggressive political protest which too had linkages with the ancient Hindu heritage. The partition of Bengal provided a chance for the aggressive nationalist elements within and outside the Congress to fine tune their political strategy. They came to be referred as Extremists and known for the abhorrence to the Moderates' methods such as prayers, petitions or constitutional protests. They hated working with the British bureaucracy that was rampantly trampling the interests of Indians. The Extremists opted for a policy of non-cooperation with the unjust bureaucracy. Moderates too were dissatisfied with the haughty and at times racist attitude of the British officers and they wanted to change it. The Extremists on their part wanted to demolish the bureaucracy.

Extremism as a political ideology had different modes and shades. The Extremism that is being referred here in the context of Tilak and Aurobindo was not the kind of armed violence that some of secret societies of Indian nationalists had resorted to particularly in Bengal and the Punjab. The Moderate leaders who did not want the end of the British rule as, in their opinion it was extremely beneficial for India had in fact named Tilak and his colleagues in the Congress as

Extremists. In the Congress the Extremists failed to convince most of their colleagues to switch over to an assertive and radical strategy while dealing with the foreign rulers. However, they had become very popular among the masses especially after 1905. The arbitrary partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon was a malicious move of the British to instigate communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims and thus sow the seed of mutual animosity between the two major communities of India. The Muslim League that came into existence in 1906 in Dhaka had the patronage of the British and the organisation came handy for the foreign rulers to violently oppose those who were protesting against the partition of the province. With the aim to counter the Swadeshi Movement, the Muslim League created Swajati cells under its auspices that would violently attack the Swadeshi volunteers and the police would usually side with the Swajati activists.

Added to partition of Bengal, the ever deteriorating economic conditions also gave a fillip to the popularity of the Extremist leaders and their stratagems. Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh in Punjab and Chidambaram Pillay in Madras made a common cause with Bal Gangadhar Tilak. These leaders themselves believed and also succeeded in convincing the masses that the British rule was solely responsible for the economic ruin of the country. They conveyed to the masses that the British were looting the material resources of India to enrich their industry in England, that they were responsible for ruining the indigenous industries, that it was because of their mismanagement that the ill effects of natural calamities like famines got increased manifold and that the British were treating Indians as slaves. Many of charges were almost true and the Extremists, in particular, Tilak succeeded in stimulating the common men and farmers to rise against the British. Thus, Tilak was the first mass leader who gave a definite direction to our national movement. He also became a leader of national stature whose comrades strived to execute his political ideas on different provinces.

In Punjab, for instance, common people were extremely disconcerted with the foreign rulers as almost all sections of the society were facing economic difficulties. The farmers in that province had to suffer because of unjust land revenue policy of the British. In such conditions boycott movement was the favoured alternative which created serious problems for the rulers. One of Tilak's close colleagues in Punjab, Ajit Singh openly made an appeal to the people of Punjab to rise up against the foreign rulers. He said; "Hindu brothers, Mohammedan brothers, Sepahi brothers - we are all one. The government is not even dust before us....What have you got to fear? ....Our numbers are much greater. True they have guns, but we have

fists...You are dying from the plague and other diseases, so better sacrifice yourselves to your motherland. Our strength lies in unity..."

Thereafter, a huge crowd of coolies, workers, farmers and common men went on strike and also took out a procession in Rawalpindi on May 1, 1907, registered their protest emphatically. The procession was far from peaceful as the enraged common men attacked those British men whom they encountered, vandalised government establishments, Christian missionaries and destroyed the commercial enterprises of the British. Though, the might of the British colonial masters could suppress the popular revolt, the morale of the British authorities in Punjab was badly shaken. In retaliation, they immediately arrested Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai and deported them to Burma without trial. Many people were arrested and persecuted and a state of emergency was declared in the province. It is significant to note that the Russian consular official Chirkin had been quite farsighted in his May 28, 1907 report when he wrote:"The outburst in Punjab is by its character more dangerous than the Bengal unrest.....This outburst has roused all India." A similar kind of revolt broke out in a few places of South India such as Trivandrum, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin in 1908. In Trivandrum the incidents were particularly too violent as the people there attacked police stations, liberated prisoners and set the government offices on fire. The British arrested Chidambaram Pillay, the follower of Tilak's brand of politics and prosecuted him. During the course of the trial Pillay refused to renounce the struggle for achieving the national objectives and consequently he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Thus, the idea of Extremism in the context of political thoughts of Tilak and Aurobindo was not exactly an armed revolution. The minor incidents of violence that occurred in different parts of the country in the aftermath of partition of Bengal were incidental and were not the off-shoot of the political strategy of these two nationalist leaders. The most favoured themes of the Extremist leaders of the Congress were Swadeshi, Boycott and Swaraj. Swadeshi Movement was aimed at putting an end to the economic loot of the material resources of India that was the primary objective of the British raj. The strategy of Boycott with British administration and of the foreign products was a logical corollary of the Swadeshi Movement. It had a two-sided objective. First, by boycotting the foreign products the Extremist leaders wanted to deprive the foreign rulers to continue with the policy of 'economic drain' and second, boycott of foreign goods necessarily meant usage of indigenous products by millions of people that was necessary to give a much needed boost to the indigenous industry. Inspired by the writings and speeches of Tilak and other Extremist leaders the people vowed to stop using foreign products. The publicly arranged bonfire of foreign

clothes and other products. At this point of time in the history of freedom struggle women too joined the agitation in large numbers as they were also in the forefront in boycotting the foreign products. Swaraj (literally self-rule) was the most important theme of the political ideology of the Extremists. It was Tilak who stirred the nation by his call of 'Swaraj is my birth right and I will have it.' This line of assertive and confrontationist politics inspired the common men and they were attracted to the national movement.

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## **6.2. SPLIT IN CONGRESS:**

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The increasing popularity of the Extremist leaders among the common people was a direct challenge to the soft and conciliatory style of politics of the Moderates. In fact, no moderate leader could claim to have a mass following. Their style of functioning was elitist and they were only comfortable in making political statements within the confines of the legislative councils or writing articles that too mostly in English. Congress continued to be dominated by the Moderate leaders but they were increasingly losing touch with the ground realities. In the Banaras session of the Congress held in 1905, two leaders having allegiance to the Extremist brand of politics opposed the majority view of the delegates to welcome the Prince of Wales who was to visit India. In 1906, in the Calcutta session of the Congress, the Extremists got a remarkable success when their resolutions pertaining to Swadeshi, boycott and Swaraj were passed. However, the language in which the resolutions were drafted was indistinct as both the sides could interpret it to prove their point of view. For the Moderates Swadeshi was a good move to support the development of Indian industry. However, many of them had reservations about the strategy of boycott because that would lead to violent clashes between the nationalists and the Government and ultimately Indians would suffer. On the issue of Swaraj, the Moderate leaders interpreted the concept of self-rule within the Empire. Obviously, the Extremist leaders did not agree to these interpretations. As a result, in the Surat session of the INC held in 1907, when the Extremist leaders attempted to endorse the true meanings of the resolutions passed in the Calcutta session, the Moderates vehemently opposed the move. When Tilak rose to address the gathering physical fight broke out between the supporters of two groups. As a result of it the Moderate majority expelled the Extremist leaders from the organization and Congress was split into two factions.

The contribution of the Extremists to our national movement can hardly be exaggerated. They gave dignified and proud idioms to the freedom fighters to meet the challenge of the colonial rule. They were the first to realise that a nationalist movement could only be successful

if it had the backing of the masses. They were forthright in declaring that the strategies of the Moderate leaders such as prayers, petitions and constitutional methods were sheer waste of time. They were responsible for transforming the INC, which was for about two decades an organisation of the Indian elite into a mass movement. Their style of functioning was closer to the hearts of the people because of which they got the inspiration and courage to oppose the might of the British imperialism. It was because of the efforts of the Extremists, the British felt threatened by the Congress for the first time and took certain precautions to placate some concerns of the nationalist leaders. A few concessions that were given in the Morley-Minto Reforms were more because of the Swadeshi Movement and Boycott and not because of the petitions and appeals of the Moderates. During the course of the First World War, the British were wary of the Extremist leaders and that made them promise that in future the constitutional reforms would include self-governing institutions. The Extremists gave the future Congress leaders the much needed self-confidence and courage to deal with the foreign rulers.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Discuss the salient feature of extremist political ideas in the Indian context.

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2. What were the causes of the split in the Indian National Congress?

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### **6.3 TILAK AND THE IDEA OF EXTREMISM:**

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It is a historical fact that Tilak was the first important political leader who dared to speak in favour of complete political freedom from the British imperialism and he doggedly fought against the policy of moderation that was a preferred kind of political action by most of the members of the Congress in the early years of the organisation. It was not partition of Bengal alone that made Tilak adopt an aggressive

political posture against the British. He was extremely angry with the authorities because of their callous attitude towards the famine-stricken people of central India in 1896. Moreover, when in 1897, bubonic plague broke out in Bombay province the British not only failed to contain and control the epidemic but dealt with the people in a merciless manner. In the city of Poona that was worst affected the common people were infuriated because of the haughty manner adopted by the officers who were supposed to provide medical relief to the people. In the name of controlling the epidemic Assistant Collector of Poona, Mr. Rand and his staff launched a programme to destroy the houses that were purportedly affected by plague. However, they did not apply any scientific method to identify the affected buildings. They did not bother to check whether the house they were destroying was actually infected or not. As a result of this mindless and brutal drive hundreds of clean houses were destroyed and their residents were rendered homeless. Similarly, the people who were not affected by the dreaded disease were also forcibly carried away from the city and in many cases their homes were looted. The entire operation thus exasperated the people so much that they were on the verge of resorting to violent resistance.

Tilak was naturally enraged and he wrote a series of articles in his Marathi weekly, *Kesari*, against British officers' cruelty and brutal behaviour. He also quoted the Hindu sacred scripture Bhagvad Gita to prove the point that in such conditions when the authorities were out to destroy the lives and properties of the people, armed resistance could be justified. Incidentally, a young man, Damodar Chapekar, assassinated Rand, and the British authorities linking Tilak's inflammatory articles with the killing prosecuted him for the charge of sedition. Though Tilak had criticised Rand for his pitiless attitude towards the people of Poona and he had also condemned the British bureaucracy for their senseless and mismanaged campaign to control plague, he did not instigate Chapekar or anyone else for that matter to kill Rand. As has already been pointed out that Tilak did not specifically favour armed revolt to get rid of the British yoke. For the British authorities, however, Tilak posed a serious threat to their interests and for that reason he was convicted on sedition charge and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

Tilak was also influenced by Swami Vivekananda's movement of revival of Hinduism that gave rise to militant nationalism. The oppressive policies of Lord Curzon too were responsible to the emergence of extremism as a political alternative. Furthermore, the stories of atrocities and persecution of the Indian labourers in South Africa by the colonial Government also reached the nationalist leaders and they realised that the British would never treat Indians honourably

as human beings. Tilak and his supporters decided not to tolerate such an inhuman treatment of Indians and would fight rather than plead for their rights. Tilak wrote, "Political rights will have to be fought for... Protests are of no avail; mere protests not backed by self-reliance will not help the people. The days of protests and prayers are gone." For Tilak the constitutional method of protest, much favoured by the Moderates, was a sign of weakness. An important facet of Tilak's approach to politics was his insistence on involving the common men, farmers, workers and villagers in the nationalist struggle. He rightly judged that the real force of a movement lied in the backing it got from the masses. He tried to convince his Congress colleagues about it as he wrote: "We must give the best political education possible to the ignorant villagers. We must meet them on terms of equality, teach them their rights and show how to fight constitutionally. Then only the government will realize that to despise the Congress is to despise the Indian nation." Here lies the major difference between Moderates' mode of politics and Tilak's attempt to build a genuine national movement involving masses against the British.

The partition of Bengal provided the right kind of atmosphere in the country to popularise Extremists' style of politics. Tilak did not miss the opportunity and through his speeches and writings transformed the popular discontent of the people that was mostly confined to Bengal into a truly national movement against the British. He extended his complete support to the Swadeshi and Boycott movements and stirred the imagination of the masses by raising the slogan of Swaraj. At this point of time Tilak was at the peak of his popularity and he had become a national leader in the real sense. In the Calcutta session of the Congress it was mainly because of his efforts a resolution endorsing Swadeshi was passed. He praised the Bengali people for carrying on a popular movement against the British and particularly admired the efforts of Surendranath Bannerjee for his dynamic leadership to mobilise people for the Swadeshi movement. Though the Moderate leaders gave their support to the Swadeshi resolution in the Calcutta session they did not approve of the Boycott movement. It was another contentious point between the Moderates and Tilak. He was of the view that the Swadeshi movement would be rendered meaningless if it was not accompanied by the boycott of the foreign goods. In his words, "when you prefer to accept Swadeshi you must boycott Videshi (foreign) goods. Without boycott Swadeshi cannot flourish."

The significant feature of Swadeshi and Boycott movements was that they attracted the common people in large numbers. These strategies were designed to damage the economic interests of the foreign rulers and simultaneously give a push to the Indian industry. At the same time these strategies also served as political weapons to



shake the very foundation of the British raj. The movement of Boycott gradually spread to many other parts of the country. In fact, it was the first mass movement that engulfed almost the entire nation into its fold. With boycott of foreign products the masses were encouraged to use only those goods which were indigenously manufactured. Swadeshi was no doubt the first important campaign that really harmed the foreign looters of Indian material resources and accelerated the pace of industrialisation in India. The idea that was dear to the heart of Tilak and his nationalist colleagues was that the growth of Indian industry would lead to economic self-sufficiency and that in turn would ensure self-reliance in every field of human activity. For Tilak, Swadeshi was akin to dharma as it would free the Indians from the clutches of foreign exploiters and instil in their hearts the respect for self-help and self-reliance. Tilak was satisfied about the popularity of Swadeshi in the entire country and commented, "To recognise the land of the Aryas as mother earth is the Swadeshi movement."

Another incident of violence ultimately led to Tilak's imprisonment in exile. This time two Bengali youths, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose made an attempt to kill a British District Judge, Douglass Kenford by throwing a bomb on his carriage in Muzaffarpur on April 30, 1908. The judge was not hurt but some women travelling in the carriage got killed. Both the youths were arrested. Chaki committed suicide in confinement while Bose was tried and awarded capital punishment. Referring to the incident Tilak wrote an article in *Keasari* blaming the unjust and anti-people policies of the Government for the rise of violence in the country. The British authorities lost no time in arresting Tilak. He was charged of sedition, tried and sentenced to six years of imprisonment in exile. He was sent to Mandalay prison in Burma where he was put in solitary confinement.

What the Moderate leaders usually described Tilak's extremism was in fact an aggressive, or we may call, militant nationalism. Tilak justified his mode of politics because he was convinced that the British rulers had ruined the local industries and trade and forced the people to lead a life of slavery. Contrary to Moderates' estimation, Tilak proclaimed that the British rule did not offer education, rights or respect for public opinion. He pointed out that under the yoke of the British raj the people all the time suffered from three Ds viz Daridra (poverty), Dushkal (famine) and Dravyashosha (drain). He strongly believed that the colonial rule was detrimental to the progress, prosperity and welfare of the country. He, therefore, prescribed that for the sake of development of Indian industry, spread of education and even for bringing about social reforms swaraj was the only remedy.

**Check Your Progress:**

1. Examine Tilak's role as the leader of the extremist movement in India.

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2. Tilak is often called 'the father of Indian unrest' and 'a prince of patriots'. How far do you agree with these views about Tilak and why?

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**6.4. AUROBINDO'S IDEA OF EXTREMISM:**

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It was a paradox of history that the scion of an affluent family who had spent 14 years from the age of 7 to 21 studying European classics and languages in institutions that were deeply rooted in British traditions ultimately became the bitterest critic of the British rule in India and even resorted to violent means to free India from the foreign rule. Aurobindo's transformation was without doubt astonishing. Another irony was that his father who was a foreign educated physician and completely anglicized in his tastes and manners too turned hostile to the British raj and also communicated his disillusionment with the British rulers to his son who was then studying in England. The frequent stories of Government atrocities against the Indians and the descriptions of unjust and exploitative policies of the British that reached young Aurobindo through *The Bengalee* newspaper that his father would send him created a huge impact on Aurobindo's mind and he began taking interest in Indian political affairs. While at Cambridge he got involved in the activities of the students' union, Majlis and passionately took part in elocution and debate events. More often than not he would criticise British imperialism and expose the cruel treatment the British rulers meted out to Indians. This was also the time when he joined a secret society named 'The Lotus and Dagger' formed by some overenthusiastic

students of Indian origin. The members of the secret society had to take an oath that they would strive for the liberation of India from the clutches of British imperialism. Though the society did nothing spectacular but its membership was indicative of young Aurobindo's deep concern for his motherland.

The significant point was that in spite of being away from India for 14 years, Aurobindo felt deeply about the hardships of his countrymen. He could not clear the horse riding segment of the ICS examination and consequently decided to return to India in 1893. He had already got a job offer from Maharaja of Baroda which he accepted. In Baroda first he served in the State Revenue Service and later shifted to teach English in Baroda College. Once in India he took keen interest in nationalist brand of Indian politics that was being spearheaded by Tilak. Since he was in the service of the Maharaja, he published his political writings anonymously in a volume named *New Lamps for Old*. His articles were extremely critical of the Moderate leaders who were dominating the Congress at that time. He called them the sycophants of the British rulers who wanted to achieve a better deal for Indian by petitions, prayers and flattery. For him the Moderates were a shameless group of conceited men belonging to the middle class who had been compromised. In his writings Aurobindo directly addressed the people of India to wake up from the centuries-old stupor and get prepared to struggle to free India from the foreign rulers. He advised the people not to be taken in by the 'mendicant' and extremely soft policies of the Moderate leaders towards the haughty foreign rulers.

His open call for revolt and scathing criticism of the policies of the Moderates created a sensation throughout the country. It was not merely an attack on the Moderate leadership of the Congress but was also an attack on the very existence of British rule in India. In the tradition of other Extremist leaders he refused to be subservient to the British and declared that the Indians had the right to demand total political emancipation from the misrule of the colonisers. Again, like other Extremist leaders Aurobindo too idolized the motherland and because of which its exploitation by the foreign rulers was, for him, a blasphemous act that had to be obliterated by all possible means. Some of the means he suggested as necessary in the struggle against the foreign rulers were self-reliance and self-sacrifice. He was in complete agreement with Tilak and other militant nationalists that the movements such as Swadesh, Boycott of foreign products and passive

resistance were effective political strategies and were indispensable tactics to pressurise the British rulers.

His political ideas were also embedded in Hinduism and in this respect too he was closer to Tilak. He reiterated Tilak's line of thinking that Swaraj was the birthright of Indians and there could possibly be no argument against this basic tenet. His knowledge of European history made him realise that every nationality had a right to have its sovereign government in its natural geographical region. Therefore, he forcefully contended that India belonged to Indians and they had the natural right to have their own government in the country. He was not only advocating the expulsion of the British rulers but was also against the Western domination in the field of education and culture. He believed that because of the excessive Western influences the great nation of India got degenerated and the earlier these influences were discarded the better. In this respect he was very much influenced by Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda.

He lamented that, the Congress that had an all-India presence almost did nothing to give a sense of self-respect and self-confidence to Indians so that they could muster their energies to fight for the freedom of their nation. He was highly critical of the Congress style of politics and in this connection he observed: "I say of the Congress, then, this—that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and wholeheartedness, and the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts, not the right sort of men to be leaders; in brief, that we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind, at any rate by the one-eyed." Aurobindo's basic argument against the Moderate leaders of the Congress was that instead of harnessing and banking on the innate power of the people of India they opted for seeking the blessing of the British masters by means of petitions and prayers. He did not believe in the gradualist approach to achieve the political goals. He emphatically demanded that the Congress should alter its political methods by adopting a more dynamic and aggressive approach with the purpose of realising India's liberation "through purification by blood and fire."

He was of the opinion that for the liberation of the country the Indian had to rediscover the national spirit by being proud of their ancient cultural heritage and at the same time they should chose the right kind of political strategies to accomplish their objective. It was for

this reason he supported Tilak's attempts to revive Ganesh festival by rationalising that the masses could be inspired to join the political struggle through religious passion. Aurobindo argued that for making India a great nation in future we had to revive its past glory. He was aware that the political goal of India's liberation from the foreign domination would not come only through cultural and religious revival. He exhorted the people to get prepared for a long and difficult political struggle against the foreign rulers that might require all sorts of sacrifices. Aurobindo proclaimed that politics was the dharma of the Kshatriya and in the Kshatriya spirit alone, freedom and greatness of the country could be attained; not by the spirit of the Baniya trying to buy freedom in the cheapest market. Here, he was glorifying the valour of the so-called martial caste of traditional Hindu society.

Aurobindo had before him to choose between the two alternatives for achieving the liberation of India. He had before him the revolutionary option and also the method of passive resistance. In the initial phase of political activism Aurobindo was convinced that the British could be expelled from India by armed revolution. He was inspired by Bankim Chandra Chatterji's *Anand Math* and wanted to establish a temple sanctified for the goddess Bhawani around which a band of ascetic devotees would be enrolled who would voluntarily take an oath to sacrifice everything including their lives for the liberation of the motherland. Nevertheless, this grand plan of Aurobindo never materialised but he maintained contacts with the revolutionaries without directly taking part in their actions. He was arrested and prosecuted in the Alipur bomb conspiracy but despite persistent efforts of the Government, Aurobindo's complicity in the conspiracy could not be proved.

Aurobindo altered his political strategy after 1905. He realised that stray incidents of assassinations and acts of violence by passionate youths would achieve no tangible nationalist goal. Though he refused to label the revolutionaries as common killers and criminals, he reviewed the revolutionary option. He wrote in 1909, "The prolongation of terrorism is undesirable in the interest of the country, for so long as young men are attached to the methods of violence, the efforts of more orderly, though not less strenuous nationalism to organise and spread itself must be seriously hampered." He now started advocating the second option i.e. passive resistance. He, nevertheless, remained the staunch critic of Moderates' strategy of

petitioning and prayers because he believed that through these methods nothing could be achieved. His contention was that national regeneration and political emancipation could be possible only if a strong central authority was created through common people's *rajshakti* or political power. If such a strong central authority deriving its sovereignty from people's political power was non-existent, then, Aurobindo believed, neither movements such as Swadeshi and Boycott of foreign products nor the campaign for national education would meet any success. While delineating his concept of passive resistance Aurobindo clarified that he aimed at creating a powerful central authority whose actions would not be questioned or challenged by even the foreign bureaucracy so long as it remained working under the British Empire. So, despite a dislike for the British ways of governance, Aurobindo did not advocate a violent removal of the British from India while explaining his concept of passive resistance. His aim in creating a powerful central authority to which all Indians should owe allegiance was to assign to it the control of all branches of our national life.

The strategy of passive resistance prior to Aurobindo's arrival on political horizon was one of the political methods of the Moderate leaders as well. Nonetheless, their idea of passive resistance was to redress a grievance by constitutional means. Aurobindo gave the concept more potency so that it did not remain mere petitioning. He explained the qualitative difference between the concept of passive resistance as practised by the Moderate leaders and his own idea about it by citing certain examples. For instance, he pointed out, that in the past, to replace the unjust revenue by permanent settlement the strategy of passive resistance was employed. However, the cesses and local taxes kept increasing even after permanent settlement and no solution was provided to remove the injustice. Another example was that for putting an end to executive tyranny the method of passive resistance was used by demanding and accomplishing the separation of judicial and executive functions. Aurobindo argued that executive tyranny would not vanish so long as the executive and judicial branches remained under the control of the British officers. Moreover, in the past to contain the drain on the country the passive resistance meant making petitions for the employment of Indians in the services. Aurobindo counter-argued that by holding simultaneous civil service examinations or recruiting more Indians in the services the problem

would not be solved because the civil servants even if they happened to be Indians would remain subservient to the white bosses and would be in no position to do justice with India and Indians.

Aurobindo recommended the establishment of a constitutional and democratic self-government that would ensure the end of economic woes of the country by protecting commercial and industrial interests of the Indians and would encourage the growth of Indian capital for creating jobs for the countrymen. He believed that by restraining the autocratic and unjust rule of the British bureaucracy the Moderate leaders could have solved quite a few problems of the country. Aurobindo observed with much grief that the Indian liberals could not comprehend this obvious fact as they seriously believed in the racial superiority of the British and could only think of servitude in relation to their foreign masters.

Having rejected the methods of the Moderates, Aurobindo explained that the choice of the method of resistance largely depended on the kind of oppression and political conditions prevalent in a country. Citing example of Russia, Aurobindo argued that it was the unprecedented brutality of the rulers that forced the people of the country to resort to violent methods of resistance. Similar story was repeated in Ireland. However, in case of India, according to Aurobindo the nature of British rulers' oppression was subtle and within the framework of laws that they themselves made. Aurobindo admitted that the British authorities did have some respect for life, liberty and property. Thus, in the Indian circumstances, Aurobindo suggested that Indians should opt for Peaceful resistance.

Aurobindo's ideas of resisting the British rule underwent changes. In the beginning of his political activism he favoured adopting the violent means to throw the British from India. He even supported and maintained contacts with a few secret organisations that were planning an armed revolution in India. He, however, gradually altered his opposition to the British rule. He had realised that the young members of the secret organisations were randomly assassinating some lowly placed British bureaucrats that hardly mattered for the larger cause of motherland's emancipation. These youths were needlessly sacrificing their lives. Consequently, in his later political phase Aurobindo approved of the strategies of Swadeshi, Boycott and passive resistance that was much different from the variety favoured by the Moderates. We may thus conclude that what is known as Extremism of

Tilak and Aurobindo was not even remotely connected with the concept of armed revolution. It was a vigorous and assertive expression of Indian nationalism.

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## **6.5 SUMMARY:**

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The colonisation of India by the British resulted in two broad responses—one of conciliation and adoption and the other of confrontation. The second response is usually described as extremism in Indian political thinking. When the INC was incepted it was dominated by the constitutionalists who believed in a conciliatory approach to redress the grievances of Indians. These moderates dominated the INC until 1905. With the partition of Bengal, the extremist faction led by Tilak started asserting within the nationalist organisation. Swaraj and Swadeshi became the popular rallying points for the extremists. In response the moderate majority of the INC expelled the extremists from the organisation. However, the extremists continued to play a pivotal role in the freedom struggle. They gave a sense of dignity and confidence to the freedom fighters. They were also responsible for transforming the INC into a mass movement.

Tilak was undoubtedly the tallest leader among those freedom fighters who came to be described as the extremists. He was staunchly critical of the methods and strategies of the moderates who, in the name of constitutional ways, were mostly engaged in submitting applications and memorandums to the colonial masters for the solution of the pressing problems of the people. There were reasons that forced Tilak to sponsor a militant form of nationalism. He was brave enough to raise the issue of Swaraj and insightful enough to see through the British manipulations to ruin Indian economy. Therefore, he supported the Swadeshi movement as well. He was also among the earliest freedom fighters who employed religious idioms and symbols to promote political objectives—a controversial strategy from the point of view of secularism. Though he was the champion of militant nationalism, he did not exactly supported the 'cult of bomb' or armed struggle against the imperialists.

Though Aurobindo spent 14 years of his early life in England studying in some of the best educational institutions there, he ultimately ended up as significant militant nationalist in the tradition of Tilak. In the initial phase of his political career he even supported the



overthrow of the British rule by armed revolution. Subsequently, he however, changed his political strategy and advocated the concept of passive resistance. Nonetheless, this strategy should not be confused with the methods of the moderates. Aurobindo was absolutely critical of the methods of the moderates which he called subservience to the British masters. He emphasised on regeneration of Indian culture and intellectual heritage and shunning of western ideas and educational system. He put emphasis on self-reliance and self-sacrifice for the cause of the motherland. Aurobindo, besides Tilak, was influenced by the ideas of Vivekananda and Dayanand Saraswati.

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## 6.5 QUESTION

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1. Discuss Aurobindo's contribution to the revolutionary political ideas in the Indian context.
2. Critically examine Aurobindo's contribution to Indian freedom struggle.

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## 6.7 SUGGESTED READING:

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## Bal Gangadhar Tilak

### Unit Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Nationalism
- 7.3 On Education
- 7.4 On Social Reforms
- 7.5 The Concept of Swaraj
- 7.6 Summary
- 7.7 Question
- 7.8 Suggested Reading

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### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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One of the staunchest opponents of the British rule Bal Gangadhar Tilak popularly known as Lokmanya (literally: revered by the people ) was born at Chikhali a village in Ratnagiri district of coastal Maharashtra, on July 23, 1856. This son of a school teacher, Gangadhar Pant, Tilak was destined to be a fearless nationalist who would radically change the course of our freedom movement. Through journalism and unprecedentedly competent leadership, Tilak took on the might of the British Empire and almost succeeded in shaking its foundation. He launched the well designed programmes for national education and through various popular measures stirred the imagination of the masses. It is a historical fact that Tilak was the first mass leader of national stature. His contribution to transform the Indian National Congress into a broad-based people's organization was extremely significant. He was a man of courage who would not mince words while attacking the unjust policies of the foreign rulers. He remained politically active for almost four decades from 1880 to 1920, (the year he passed away) and this period of his political struggle could be justifiably described as the period of nationalist resistance in the history of Western India. He was among the earliest leaders who actually chiseled the contours of Indian nationalism.

Tilak had a well-disciplined upbringing as his educationist father and deeply religious mother saw to it that he should get proper education and also acquire a strong moral character deeply embedded

in the ancient religious and moral values. He was also informed about the classical stories of bravery from ancient history and mythology which had a lasting impact on his personality. Tilak was exceptionally good in Mathematics and Sanskrit, the two disciplines he kept studying and doing research in, throughout his life. He passed his matriculation in 1872. He did his B.A. from Deccan College, Poona in 1876, securing first class and passed the L.L.B. examination in 1879. When he got married he was 15 year old. With the kind of education he had it was very easy for him to secure a cushy government job either in civil service or in judiciary. He, however, was made of different stuff. There were incidents that greatly influenced the mind of Tilak to opt for himself a course of educator, journalist and leader, all for the national regeneration and emancipation of his motherland. The first incident that influenced him greatly was a militant attempt to liberate India. The failure of the 1857 uprising had terribly demoralized the nationalist Indians. However, a revolutionary from Maharashtra, Vasudeo Balwant Phadke had led a revolt against the British colonial power in 1879 and Tilak was one of his many youthful followers and supporters in the city of Poona. Though the valiant effort was not successful, for Tilak it proved a lifelong inspirational source for fighting for the nation. The second event that left a mark on the mind of Tilak was the trial of Prince of Baroda state, Malhar Rao Gaikwad who was tried for the alleged crime of trying to poison the Resident of the state, Colonel Phayre. Tilak was incensed because Gaikwad was not guilty of the purported crime. The last incident that made an impact on Tilak's personality was the terrible famine of 1877-78, that claimed more than 50 lakh lives. The British administration remained callous and did very little to offset the ill-effects of the famine. Tilak was naturally furious and that made him decide to devote himself for the service of the nation.

The kind of childhood he had and his command over Sanskrit made him an ardent admirer of ancient Indian culture and the values projected by Hindu religion. As a political activist he consciously tried to revive the similar standards that once made India a great nation. The logical corollary of such an approach was the refutation of Western values, Western education and the condemnation of the leaders who advocated emulation of Western values and culture. It was because of this reason he was bitterly critical of the Moderates of the Indian National Congress and derided their brand of politics. His professional training in Law gave him an opportunity to study the ancient Indian sources of law, the legal manuscripts and the commentaries thereon. As a result, his mastery over Sanskrit, his extremely religious bend of mind and his systematic studies of ancient

legal and philosophical tomes made him a committed admirer of the past glory of Indian civilization.

Tilak also delved in the economic exploitation of India at the hands of the foreign rulers. He did a remarkable service during the difficult days of the famine of 1896 by educating people about their rights. It was because of his concerted efforts that Swadeshi became an all-India movement. Moreover, he forcefully advocated the boycott of foreign products without which the Swadeshi Movement would have remained a lopsided political agitation. In order to educate people about political affairs he decided to launch two weeklies, 'Kesari' in Marathi and Mahratta in English. In this endeavor Chiplunkar, Agarkar and Namjoshi were his colleagues in the beginning. Through these papers he made gallant efforts to instill the hearts and minds of his countrymen with the feeling of nationalism.

Tilak first attended the session of the INC in 1889, and created uproar by openly attacking the misrule of the British and advocating a policy of militant nationalism. It was a totally new approach that was unknown to the Westernized and privileged leaders of the Congress. Tilak brought with him the uncomfortable ground realities of India in the session of the Congress and that was enough to upset the Moderate leadership of the organization. He moved some really significant resolutions in the sessions of the Congress that included the Permanent Settlement and decentralization of finance. Though he remained in a minority in the INC, his involvement in the activities of the organization ultimately helped it emerge as a truly all-India force to struggle for the aspirations of the people.

Tilak's novel, and for some scholars controversial, methods of political mobilization were the organization of the Ganesh Festival first in 1893, and Shivaji Jayanti in 1895. These events became permanent features of Maharashtra's political calendar through which Tilak was endeavoring to infuse the feeling of militant nationalism in the hearts and minds of Indians. It is usually pointed out that Tilak's penchant for ancient Hindu traditions was instrumental in launching the two events. Nonetheless, a scholar on Tilak, D. V. Tamhankar pointed out that Tilak was not inspired by the Indian sources when he started the two festivals. According to Tamhankar, his knowledge of Greek history and, in particular, the annual observance of the Olympic Games gave an idea to Tilak to start Ganesh festival. The inspiration to start the Shivaji Jayanti came from, as per the research of Tamhankar, Carlyle and Ruskin who dealt with the attitude of hero-worship.

Tilak had to suffer because of his courageous political writings and actions. He was imprisoned for quite a few times. He was expelled from the Congress because of his Extremist ideas. His close colleagues who were with him when he had started his journalistic and

educational activities left him when he needed them the most. During the last phase of his political activism, Tilak was exclusively striving to popularise the Home Rule League, a movement that aimed achieving Swaraj. At the very fag-end of his life he visited England (1918-19) and made sincere efforts to forge cordial relations between the then ruling Labour Party and the nationalist leaders of India.

Tilak is also known for his scholarly writings that first appeared mostly in the columns of Kesari. Amongst his many significant works that appeared in his Marathi weekly, his essays on Spencer, Mahabharata and a research article to determine the date of birth of Shivaji were exceptional pieces of writing. He creatively used his mastery over Sanskrit and his discerning competence of Mathematics to produce a work , Orion: Studies in Antiquity of Vedas, that established that the Rigveda was written in 4500 BC. This particular book was appreciated by even Western Indologists. His other book dealing with the original home of the Aryans, Arctic Home of the Vedas, remains as one of the most original and scholarly works in Sanskrit. Tilak's most popular and also profound work was Gita Rahasya, a reinterpretation of the most sacrosanct book of the Hindus. In view of Tilak, the Gita's message was essentially Karmyoga, which according to him encompasses the entire human life. He cleverly juxtaposed the philosophy of Karmayoga with modern issues of political morality, social values and national honour. Drawing inspiration from the Gita, Tilak justified militant opposition to the foreign rule. These scholarly works make Tilak a unique freedom fighter who was equally comfortable in political action and serious scholastic pursuits.

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## **7.2. ON NATIONALISM :**

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Tilak's idea of nationalism was deeply rooted in religion and in this respect he rejected the concept of nationalism of his predecessors who since the inception of the Congress were defining it in pure liberal-secular terms. Tilak was a devout Hindu having faith in the Advaita philosophy. He believed in the existence of an omnipotent, omnipresent, Supreme Being of the Rigveda and also had unflinching faith in the veracity of the Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita. He was also committed to the idea of a personal God (ishta-devata), however, for the masses whose spiritual consciousness was less developed, Tilak recommended that they should be provided with religious symbols. He had firm faith in the reincarnation theory of God as he maintained that Lord Krishna was indeed an incarnation of God. He also approved of the ritualistic aspect of Hinduism and was of the opinion that religious ceremonies kept changing with the passage of time and they should be

observed so long as they were not altered consciously. He sought pride in being the follower of Sanatana Dharma (eternal faith). He considered the Vedas, Gita and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata as the common heritage of all Hindus. Tilak was aware of the sectarian differences among the Hindus but expected that by ignoring these differences all Hindus should be united to create a strong Hindu Rashtra.

Tilak believed that the essential teachings of Hinduism underlined the importance of action. In that sense, for him, it was a very practical religion that believed in resorting right course of action to meet the challenges of a specific period of history. In the context he cites Bhagwad Gita as evidence wherein God promised to reincarnate himself as many times as the necessity demanded. Contrary to the liberal-secular political ideas that were much favoured by most of the Congress leaders in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Tilak asserted that religion could not be separated from politics. He justified the unification of the two by arguing that to accomplish any task along with competence, discipline and determination, a firm conviction that the task we had undertaken was noble one, was absolutely required and only then God would help us to complete the task successfully. This was obviously a metaphysical, spiritual approach to socio-political issues that was obviously very popular among the teeming masses. Tilak would frequently refer to the immortality of soul by which he meant two things, i) an individual's soul (atma) that would strive to seek unity with God, and ii) the collective spirit of a nation that would always seek to be liberated and free. His idea of nationalism was different from the Liberal nationalist of the Congress in another respect. The Liberal leaders mainly concentrated on finding solutions for economic grievances and getting political concessions. For Tilak nationalism was realizing an independent, self-governing existence that would create favourable conditions for the fruition of the soul of a culture. His nationalism, to put it plainly, was deification of the motherland.

Tilak lamented that because of India's enslavement for centuries, India's cultural soul too got enslaved. It was Shivaji Maharaj who made a valiant effort to restore the spiritual-cultural soul by establishing an independent nation of the Marathas. Nevertheless, India once again lost its cultural soul because of the coming of the Europeans and the ultimate domination of the British. In the circumstances he was political active, he naturally had to strive for the emancipation of the cultural soul of India by overthrowing the foreign rule from the country. His entire approach in this regard was revivalist as he craved for reinventing the glorious past of the nation that was prevalent in the Vedic period.

In order to unite all Hindus, Tilak devised a strategy to familiarize the people with certain symbols and popularize a few festival that would have a strong appeal to the Hindu psyche. He started the celebration of the Shivaji Jayanti in 1894 and the Ganesh Festival in 1896. His intention was to inspire the common man to be proud of their religious and historical heritage. However, the aggressive celebrations of these festivals resulted in quite a few Hindu-Muslim riots in the Bombay province. He was hoping that the two festivals would bring about unity and brotherhood between the Brahmins and non-Brahmin castes of Maharashtra. The animosity between the Brahmins and the non-Brahmins, in particular the Maratha caste was too bitter and Tilak wanted to tone it down for creating a united force of the Hindus. He was planning a mass awakening for the cause of the nation. He found a powerful icon in Shivaji to inspire the masses to join the national struggle against the foreign oppressors. Inspired by Bhagwad Gita, Tilak believed that Shivaji was a vibhuti i.e. an incarnation of divine being or a man having exceptional powers bestowed on him by divinity. He placed Shivaji on such a high citadel where he assumed the attributes of a super-human being for Tilak declared that for such a man the principles of ordinary morality did not apply. Celebrating Shivaji Jayanti, in the opinion of Tilak would rejuvenate the nationalist spirit of the people of India. Tilak was not happy with the kind of curricula that was prescribed in the government sponsored school. In 1908, he emphatically stated that India needed the syllabi for National Education that would make provision for teaching the lives and achievements of national heroes such as Shivaji but would also teach the students the religious and cultural values of ancient India. He derided secular education because, in his opinion, it did not help a student sufficiently to build his character.

The frequent Hindu-Muslim communal riots that would break out in the Bombay province at the time of Shivaji Jayanti celebrations made available an opportunity to the opponents of Tilak to portray him as an anti-Muslim leader. In response Tilak clarified his stand in choosing Shivaji for the annual celebrations. He made it clear that his idea of spiritual nationalism was not an anti-Muslim concept. Secondly, his aim in popularising Shivaji Jayanti celebrations was also not an anti-Muslim programme. According to him he chose Shivaji because the great Maratha warrior represented the spirit of courage to challenge the rule of oppression and injustice. He Also clarified that the methods Shivaji Maharaj employed to fight against injustice were necessary for his times. Tilak made it plain that he was not advocating application of similar methods to fight against the foreign rule. He only sought to reinvent the basic spirit that made Shivaji Maharaj to stand up against the mighty Mughals. Shivaji fought the Muslims because

during his times they were the oppressors. Tilak reasoned that when the country was under the control of the British there was no cause to fight against the Muslims. He hoped that the Hindus and Muslim would form a common front to fight against the foreign rulers.

Though Tilak made use of Hindu symbols and idioms for political aims, he was not a communal or anti-Muslim leader. He had always advocated for extending similar social, cultural and religious rights for Hindus and Muslims. In his personal dealings he was quite close to some of the Muslim leaders who too had a high opinion about him. For instance, Hasrat Mohani, a totally selfless and sincere leader and Shaukat Ali, the brother of Muhammad Ali and one of the leading lights of the Khilafat Movement regarded Tilak as their political guru. Muhammad Ali Jinnah who ultimately became the ideologue of Muslim separatism, had at one time praised Tilak's spirit of communal amity and his genuine nationalism. In matters of right in a just political set-up, Tilak was in favour of guaranteeing all sorts of rights to all irrespective of caste, creed or race. He valued national integration but he pointed out that the ideal would not be achieved by appeasing the minority communities but by making them realize that their rights were as valuable as the rights of the majority community. He was also critical of cow slaughter in a predominantly Hindu nation. On this count he did not want to enter into a controversy with the Muslims. His criticism in this context was directed against the British authorities who deliberately issue licenses for beef shops in localities that were predominantly Hindu. Tilak thought that it was a mischievous provocation to foster enmity between Hindus and Muslims. In this matter Tilak clarified that if a Muslim was found guilty of killing a cow in the Hindu locality he should be arrested and punished; similarly if a Hindu set free a cow from a Muslim house using force, he should also be tried and punished. These were very reasonable suggestions which should be followed in the contemporary India as well.

It must also be pointed out that his nationalism that was rooted in religion did not blur his vision about the economic component of nationalist discourse. He was in total agreement of Dadabhai Naoroji's Drain theory and more importantly he was the leading proponent of the Swadeshi and Boycott Movements. His religious propensity made him merge nationalism with what he believed as the Vedantic principle of human unity. He was of the opinion that nationalism was an offshoot of Vedantic wisdom and the two are not opposed to each other. His definition of nationalism as an integral part of dharma was an exercise to persuade common people in the national struggle as they were more familiar with idioms like dharma and religious symbols. He also believed that nationalism was not a tangible concept but it had linkages with sentiments of the people that were deeply embedded in the heroic



tales of the history of India. The launching of the Shivaji Jayanti festival was precisely because of this reason, because, for Tilak, Shivaji represented a judicious ruler who was essentially concerned about the welfare of all people and on account of his remarkable achievements he could even be called a personification of the Divine Being.

**Check Your Progress :**

1. Discuss Tilak's concept of Nationalism.

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2. Distinguish between Tilak's idea of nationalism and the one promoted by the moderates.

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**7.3 ON EDUCATION :**

The concept of making the facilities of education to each and every individual was without doubt an offshoot of the British rule in India. After the famous Minutes of Lord Macaulay in 1835, the authorities of the East India Company adopted a policy of providing modern education through English medium. The Bengalis were the first to lap up at the new opportunities that were made available to Indians. Thereafter, the British approved education became popular in Bombay Province. The earliest leaders of the Indian National Congress were also among the earliest graduates of the Universities of Calcutta and Mumbai. Most of them, however, were in awe of the British and their intellectual heritage. Almost all of them also had an abiding faith in British Liberalism and were ingenuously convinced that 'the British commitment to justice' would ultimately help establish a responsible, democratic form of government in India. Though the earliest graduates did succeed in organizing a national platform in the form of the Indian National Congress in 1885, for giving expression to the grievances of Indians, they could not make it a truly representative body of all

Indians. The INC, because of the class affiliations of its earliest leaders and the kind of education they were trained in had emerged as a body of secular-liberal-constitutionalists for whom the height of development for an Indian was to acquire a mirror image of a British man. Tilak and some of his colleagues who were collectively labeled as Extremists believed that the British mode of education would not help the growth of true nationalism in India.

Having realized this Tilak and others undertook the task of making available to the people the kind of educational institutions that would impart national education. So far as the Bombay Province, or to be precise the part that is currently known as Western Maharashtra, was concerned besides Tilak, V. K. Chiplunkar and A. G. Agarkar were also among the pioneers of a nationalist education movement. Their primary aim, according to N. C. Kelkar, was to make, "the nation to know itself and its past glories so that it may have confidence in its own strength and capacity to adapt itself wisely and well to the new surroundings without losing its individuality." Having completed his Masters and the Law education, Tilak first devoted himself to give a nationalist feel to education. At the same time he had also made up his mind to make social service projects and political reforms relevant to Indian ground realities. In the field of education his first concrete action was the establishment of New English School at Poona in January 1880. Like any constructive movement, the school too had a humble beginning with merely 19 students and the teachers, who included Tilak and some of his closest colleagues, were being paid nominal salaries. However, gradually the school acquired a very high reputation as an important educational institution and had also emerged a leading centre of public life in the city of Poona. The logical corollary of the establishment of a school was to make plans to establish a college where Indian youths would have the right type of higher education with nationalist goals in their mind and after completion of graduation the graduates would spread education among the other youths of India. In order to institute a college to impart national education, the Deccan Education Society was established in 1884. The following year, Fergusson College became a reality where Tilak started teaching Mathematics and Sanskrit. He had taken on himself additional responsibilities of looking after the management affairs and raising funds for the college. It was unfortunate that Tilak could not go along with some members of the Deccan Education Society purely on the

matters of principles and ultimately severed his connections with the Deccan Education Society in 1890. Thereafter, he devoted most of his time for political activism and journalism.

Tilak's fundamental objection to British mode of education was its disregard for religious education. In the context he stated: "After twenty years, rotting in their system, one has to look elsewhere for religious study. Men who develop the idea that religion is a force all along their educational course are afterwards not found to be wanting in any conception of duty." His scheme of national education included four important aspects i.e. i) secular education, ii) religious education, iii) industrial education and iv) political education. Among the four components, Tilak attached prime importance to religious education because, in his opinion, religion was the source of high moral principles and students who got trained in religious education remained away from doing wrong things. His concern about the industrial backwardness of the country resulted in his endeavour to popularise industrial education in India. He recommended that political education should be an obligatory component of the national education as through, it a student might become aware of his rights and duties being a citizen of a state. Despite dissociating himself with the Deccan Education Society, Tilak did not cease to be an activist in the field of education. Immediately after the split in the Congress, Tilak undertook a tour of Maharashtra to deliver lectures mainly dealing with the issue of national education.

The spread of national educations was one of the three most significant political activities of Tilak. The other two were Swadeshi and Boycott of foreign products. He was convinced from the beginning of his socio-political career that the type of education that Lord Macaulay recommended for India was not only inimical to the growth of real nationalism it was also harmful for the future of the country. He was convinced that the British mode of education would not only render most of to Indian youths indifferent to religious and cultural heritage of our nation but it would also make them irrelevant to majority of Indian people. The Indian youths trained in Western style of education, Tilak emphasized, would be uprooted from their soil and would remain Indians only by their appearance. These were the major flaws of the type of education that was being imparted in government sponsored schools and colleges and because of these drawbacks Tilak and his colleagues supported the movement for national education. They took

concrete actions to popularise national education by opening schools and colleges throughout India and did a remarkable job in providing inexpensive education to most of the underprivileged youths. Besides, the institutions imparting nationalist education inculcated the respect for self-help and self-dependence in the hearts of the Indian youths that they would not have opportunity to gain in government sponsored schools and colleges. Tilak's contribution in popularising national education and taking concrete steps to build up the required educational infrastructure for it was certainly colossal.

**Check your progress :**

1. Discuss Tilak's contribution to the cause of national education.

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2. Why did Tilak oppose the British mode of education and how his notion of national education differed from it?

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**7.4. ON SOCIAL REFORMS :**

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The Social Reform Movements that commenced in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century were mainly addressed for removal of social ills and evils from Hindu society. The significant aspect was that the British authorities who represented a commercial company then, too participated in bringing about reforms in Hindu socio-religious traditions. As a result of this policy, the evil practice of sati was prohibited in 1829 and remarriage of Hindu widows was legalized in 1829. The negative aspect of the whole exercise was that subsequently the Company authorities slowly started linking up social reform actions with political convenience. This was obviously objected to by the Hindus and Muslims of the subcontinent. Consequently the Queen's Proclamation that came after the suppression of Indian uprising of 1857 ended the Company's rule from India and the country came to be ruled directly by the British government. In the Proclamation, Queen Victoria had promised that the British administrators in India would follow a policy of non-interference in the religious and cultural traditions of Indians. However, this policy was not welcomed by the Indian social reformers. The class of Indians who had the privilege of being trained in Western

education and were also involved in social reform movements vociferously protested against the new policy of non-interference in religious issues enshrined in the Proclamation. They demanded that the government authorities should continue encouraging and implementing the reforms in Indian society. In the meanwhile there had emerged quite influential reform groups in India such as Brahma Samaj in Bengal, the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay and Jyotiba Phule's Satya Shodak Samaj in Maharashtra. Almost all the people associated with these reform movements made appeals to the British government to take a proactive part in reforming the Hindu society.

Tilak did not approve of the interference of the government in religious affairs. As a result of it he was very upset when the Indian leaders themselves started requesting the British authorities to accelerate the process of reforms in Hindu society. He was opposed to the attitude of the reformers mainly for a couple of reasons. Firstly, he argued that a plea for reforms in Hindu religious and cultural traditions reflected the inferiority complex of the reformers about their religion and culture. Secondly, he could discern an acceptance and desire for the continuation of the foreign rule on the part of those who were soliciting the support of the reforms of Hindu society. Tilak's opposition to the British rulers supporting for reforms was because they were foreigners, exploiters of Indian people and material resources and also belonged to a completely different socio-religious and cultural background. Thirdly, he was convinced that the reform movements such as the ones launched by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen and Jyotiba Phule had a hidden agenda of anti-Brahminism. Fourthly, Tilak was of the opinion that most of the reformers were the blind followers of the Western religious and cultural values and consequently came to regard the values of ancient Indian civilisation as worthless. Fifthly, Tilak argued that those who had launched the reforms projects were not even aware of the ancient religious and philosophical scriptures for which they were not in a position to comprehend the true purpose of the ancient religious and cultural practices. Though Tilak had some valid points in criticizing government interference in social reform activities but he was less than fair to the sincerity and intention of the social reformers who were genuinely committed to put Hindu society on the way to modernity and progress. He was also unfair to make a sweeping observations that the reformers were not aware of the real worth of the ancient Hindu scriptures. The intellectual giants such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahadeo Govind Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bhandarkar were great scholars of the ancient scriptures; at the same time they were well-versed in modern education.

Due to Tilak's opposition to certain reform movements he is portrayed, by a few scholars, as a reactionary and orthodox Hindu. To be fair to Tilak we may argue that he was not opposed to reforms per se but was opposed to foreign rulers' interference in ancient Indian religious and social traditions. He also objected to the Indian Liberals, who out of their inferiority complex about Indian culture and Hindu religion, had launched a campaign to goad the British authorities to bring about reforms. Moreover, for Tilak political freedom was the first priority because of which he did not wish the nationalist leaders to get entangled in contentious campaigns for reforms. His line of argument was that any reform in socio-religious traditions imposed by external agency such as government of foreign rulers would not have the real sanction of the people. He, therefore, advised the reformers to go to the people, convince them on the necessity of reforms and only with their consensus act upon any specific reform. He wanted the reformers to first bring upon the reforms in their families so that the people would change their attitude by observing the reformed practices of the families of reformers. He disliked the theoretical thrust and sermonizing about the evil practices of Hindu religion that was the usual approach of the reformers.

Nonetheless, the scholars have pointed out a few instances to prove the point that on the issue of reforms Tilak was a conservative Hindu who wished the continuation of Brahminical customs and traditions. A few examples are cited here in the context. The first one is the Rakhmabai-Dadaji case of 1886. The case pertained to the issue of child marriage that had been a widely prevalent practice in India until recently. In this particular instance, Rakhmabai was married to Dadaji when she was still a child. Obviously there was no question of obtaining her consent to the marriage. On attaining puberty she refused to live with her husband. As a result, Dadaji went to court with the plea for restitution of conjugal rights. Rakhmabai made a statement before the court that her consent was not obtained when she was married off to Dadaji because of which she should not be forced to stay with him. The lower court accepted her point of view and decided in her favour. The case went to the High Court where the judgement of the lower court was overruled and the conjugal rights were restituted to Dadaji. The Liberals such as M. G. Ranade got disappointed because of the High Court ruling while Tilak welcomed the verdict as the victory of those who wished to preserve Hindu law and traditions. In astringent series of arguments and counter-arguments, Tilak cited, in the columns of his Marathi weekly, *Kesari*, the Brahminical scriptures in support of the verdict of the High Court. The progressive social reformers were naturally dismayed with Tilak's position on the issue because it showed that for him the triumph of the ancient scriptures was more important

than the dignity and self-respect of a young woman. He had completely ignored the human angle that was at stake in the case.

The second illustration relates to the Age of Consent Bill. It was because of persistent striving by the social reformers that the Age of Consent Bill was finally moved in the Imperial Legislative Council on January 8, 1891. In a way the Bill was to offset the injustice that was done to a young woman as in the Rakhmabai-Dadaji case. It provided for raising the age of consent of a woman from 10 to 12 years for the consummation of her marriage and that in case of child marriage the bride on attaining puberty should have the right to decide whether she would like to live with her husband or not. It was a reasonable Bill from the point of human rights and the rights of women. Tilak, however, was deadily opposed to the Bill and fervently worked against those who were trying to make it a law. In this context Tilak's argument was that it amounted to unnecessary interference of the Government in religious beliefs and ancient traditions of the Hindus. It was interesting to note that a renowned Sanskrit scholar and an authority on the ancient texts, Dr. Bhandarkar had repudiated Tilak's argument and declared that a proper interpretation of the Sanskrit scriptures supported the intent of the Bill. Since Dr. Bhandarkar's reputation as an eminent Sanskrit scholar was widely acknowledged in those days, the Government relied on his interpretation and passed the Bill. Tilak's opposition to the Bill once again created an impression that he was a conservative Hindu so far as social reforms were concerned. However, Tilak had a valid point that the reforms intended to remove certain religious and cultural practices should come from within the community and the Government should not compel the Hindus to toe its line. In the context he had also enlisted certain reforms that the social reformers should practice before approaching the Government for support.

Another case in point was the Panchoud episode of 1891. The social reformers and their opponents including Tilak were invited for a tea party in a Christian Mission school by an acquaintance, Mr. Joshi. They all drank tea together. In the eyes of the orthodox Hindus it was a blasphemous act. They were particularly incensed because a person like Tilak, considered to be a protector of Hindu laws and customs, agreed to drink tea with the unclean Christians. They put extreme pressure on Tilak to do the prayaschita (atonement) for committing an irreligious act. Tilak surrendered before the pressure and agreed to do the prayaschita. In defence of his behavior Tilak stated that in order to live honourably in society one had to respect the expectations of that society and for that reason should sacrifice individualistic outlooks or wishes. This line of argument reveals that personally Tilak did not abhor the idea of having tea with Christians but he respected the

sentiments of the orthodox members of the society more than his personal point of view.

One more example of Tilak's orthodoxy was an incident related to Pandita Ramabai. A brilliant woman born in an orthodox Brahmin family, Pandita Ramabai embraced Christianity and thereafter launched a programme for education of young Hindu girls. In order to execute her objective, she established an educational institution, Sharda Sadan in the city of Poona. Tilak got suspicious about Ramabai's activities. He doubted her intentions as an educator and conjectured that by creating a façade of educational programme for Hindu girls she might have a hidden agenda of spreading Christianity among Hindus. Tilak began a sustained campaign against Ramabai and even went to the extent of calling her an enemy of the Hindus. In this particular incident Tilak had to face the combined denigration of all the social reformers who labeled him as an opponent of women's education. The charge was not totally unfounded because on the basis of a contemporary's account Tilak favoured the education of boys more than that of girls. Mr. V. R. Shinde wrote in his memoirs published in Marathi that when the issue of making primary education free came up for discussion in the Poona Municipality, Tilak opined that if the paucity of funds did not permit to provide free primary education to all then it should be provided only to the boys. In case of Ramabai, his suspicion was understandable because in those days the Christian missionaries with the covert backing of the government authorities were mostly engaged in proselytizing activities.

In yet another incident Tilak took the side of an orthodox Brahmin priest who had refused to perform Vedic rites involving non-Brahmin Hindus. The occurrence is known as the Vedkota episode of 190, which also involved the royal family of Kolhapur. The reigning Maharaja was a reformer who wanted the Brahmin priest to extend the Vedic rites to non-Brahmins as well. When the priest refused the ruler threatened to forfeit the inami properties of the priest. Tilak's argument was that compelling a priest to perform the Vedic rites against his wishes was unfair. He further pointed out that the threat of forfeiture of Brahmin's properties by the reigning Maharaja was also unjust because those properties were granted to the priest by the earlier ruler. In this particular instance too, Tilak tried to defend the orthodox Brahminical traditions.

Tilak was also opposed to inter-caste marriages. This came to light when in 1918, Vallabhbhai Patel moved a Bill in the Delhi Central Assembly to make a law permitting inter-caste marriages. Tilak put down the purpose of the Bill vehemently. In the process he also showed his upper caste bias when he wrote in Kesari that anuloma marriages (marriages between high caste men and low-caste women)



could be permitted but the patrilineal marriages (marriages between a low caste man and high caste woman) could not be allowed. A comment of Tilak that invited the all around condemnation of the social reformers was his comparison of a marriage between Aryan and non-Aryan with that of a marriage between a White and Black. The remark not only reflected Tilak's prejudice that he considered Aryans superior than non-Aryans but also showed that he deemed Blacks as inferior.

However, Tilak was a fearless crusader on the issue of abolition of untouchability from Hindu society. In this connection he made a bold statement that he would not recognize even God if He said that untouchability was ordained by Him. His reluctance to get involved in social reforms was primarily because for him the political freedom of the nation. A very significant point that should not be lost sight of while discussing Tilak's view on social reforms is the observation by B. R. Sunthakar in his scholarly work, *Maharashtra 1858 to 1920*. According to him Tilak's attitude towards social reform was not always conservative. He broadly divides Tilak's career in four phases. The first phase followed the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893 when Tilak came to the forefront as a representative of the orthodox Brahmins and leader of the Hindus. In the second phase, the partition of Bengal provided Tilak an opportunity to become a national leader. His scathing criticism of Lord Curzon's administration led to his imprisonment in exile. During the third phase that commenced with his release from imprisonment, a much matured Tilak made to bring about unity between the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916. The fourth phase was a short one, as it began a little before his death in 1920, during which Tilak devoted himself mainly to the problems of the working class. According to Sunthakar, the scholars and biographies had not taken proper notice of Tilak's last phase probably because it was very brief. However, it was significant because Sunthakar quoted a speech of Tilak delivered in Madras in 1919 in which Tilak warned the people that if they continued to ignore the problems of the labourers, India would face dire consequences. Tilak declared that the Capitalists were entitled to pocket only a decent rate of interest while the rest should go to the workers.

A point to remember is that Tilak was not a social reformer in the sense Jyotiba Phule or Raja Ram Mohan Roy are identified as social reformers. He opposed the aggressive reform movements of reformers like M. G. Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Prof. Bhandarkar, Byramji Malbari, Agarkar and others mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, Tilak believed these reformers seemed much eager to disown everything that belonged to their socio-religious heritage and reconstruct all the social and religious institutions as they were in the West. Tilak opposed social reformers over-enthusiasm in rejecting the

past glory of India because he believed that the essence of India was not in tune with the ideas such as materialism, rationalism and utilitarianism that flourished in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In this context he wrote in Kesari, "...a number of our educated men began to accept uncritically the materialistic doctrines of the Westerners. Thus, we have the pathetic situation of the new generation making their minds a carbon copy of the gross materialism of the West...Our present downfall is due not to the Hindu religion but to the fact that we have absolutely forsaken religion." Secondly, Tilak was against most of the social reforms movements because they did not have the popular support. The social reformers instead of mobilizing people for their reforms were seeking the backing of the British administration to enforce reforms as laws.

### **Check Your Progress :**

1. Critically examine Tilak's attitude towards social reforms in India.  


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2. Why did Tilak oppose most of the reforms that were championed by the social reformers?  


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### **7.5. THE CONCEPT OF SWARAJ :**

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Tilak's concept of Swaraj was also rooted in Hindu religion. In his monumental work, Gita Rahasya, which he completed during his imprisonment in Mandalay, Burma, Tilak informed that the philosophy of Advaitism enlightened him about the supremacy of freedom. The Absolute, as per Tilak's interpretation of Advaitism, was one Absolute and all the men were only parts of it. Since the Absolute had an autonomous spiritual potentiality, all men too had similar autonomous spiritual potentiality. Deriving from this basic belief Tilak observed that the individual soul could not be separated from the Absolute (God) and because of that reason an individual soul had a divine right to freedom. His deep study of Bhagwad Gita made him realize that in the absence of freedom no moral or spiritual life could exist. The India in which Tilak was born and lived was in chains of British imperialism that had not only crushed the freedom of the people but had also killed the soul of

the nation. Thus, Tilak believed that to restore the divine right of freedom to the people and revive the spirit of the nation, the British rule had to be expelled from the soil of the motherland.

For Tilak, Swaraj represented both a right of the individual and his dharma. In political discourse Tilak would define it as Home Rule while in moral terms he would equate it with spiritual freedom. He advocated that Swaraj would not be realized merely by achieving political freedom but spiritual freedom was also equally important. He asserted that political and spiritual freedoms were inseparable from each other. Achieving self rule was a political as well as moral obligation on each Indian while observance of dharma was a divine duty imposed by the Absolute. According to Tilak, Swaraj had a two-fold meaning; a) self-rule of the individual and, b) self-rule of the political community. For Tilak, Swaraj epitomizes the philosophy of life as well as the philosophy of politics. Swaraj, in relation to an individual implied morally controlling all his action as per the precepts of his personal belief (Swadharma), while for the political community, explained Tilak, it meant regulating all the affairs of the community within a moral framework as per political obligation (dhammarajya). He further clarified that Swaraj denoted self-rule within the extent of dhammarajya. Tilak was of the opinion that in the absence of dharma and Swaraj, the life would lose all its meanings. According to a scholar Tilak's concept of Swaraj was in fact an assertion of a kind of democracy that guaranteed spiritual freedom to all people.

It was not enough to get rid of foreign rule to accomplish the goal of Swaraj, it would be really achieved when the nation would be in a position to give shape to its own future. In other words, for Tilak, Swaraj was the rule of a judicious ruler over a populace that knew its political obligations and would not allow the ruler to suppress their rights. Tilak emphasized in no uncertain terms that mere political independence did not imply Swaraj; a politically independent nation could be called a Swaraj in the true sense when it had judicious rulers and morally and politically conscious people capable enough of protecting their political freedoms and dharma. Tilak further enlightened that in the immediate sense Swaraj could be defined as the rule of the people and not the rule of the bureaucracy. He emphatically declared that Swaraj preceded the campaigns for social reforms or achieving economic justice. Tilak advocated that the nationalist leaders should spend their energies in demanding Swaraj first because it served as the foundation of our nation on which we would build the nationalist edifice. In order to realize the ideal of Swaraj, Tilak recommended a four-fold programme of action that was, of course, relative to the political conditions prevalent in those days.

The programme included Swadeshi, Boycott of foreign products, National Education and Passive Resistance.

Swadeshi was obviously an important political as well as economic strategy. As a political weapon it was designed to put pressure on the British raj to respect the sentiments and aspirations of the people particularly, in the then circumstances, to rescind the decision of partition of Bengal. As an economic strategy, Swadeshi was an attempt to strengthen and promote the indigenous industries. Boycott was linked to the strategy of Swadeshi. Tilak made a fervent appeal to Indians that they should discontinue using foreign products and switch over to using Indian products. This would, as per Tilak's estimation, severely damage the economic interests of the British manufacturers who were looting the material resources of India. Tilak also advised the countrymen to use not only the indigenous products but also purge all videshi (foreign) thoughts from their minds and hearts. The programme of National Education was designed to infuse the hearts and minds of the youths of the country with national fervour and sense of discipline. The kind of education that was made available to Indians in Government aided schools and colleges, was not creating young Indians loyal to their motherland. It was churning out graduates who were Indians by their physical appearance but Westerners by their thoughts and deeds. In order to provide National Education, Tilak urged Indian elite to open schools and colleges that should provide modern education along with the courses designed to focus on ancient philosophy, religion and culture. So far as the strategy of Passive Resistance was concerned, Tilak first spoke of it in the Benaras session of the Congress and thereafter, provided more details about it in the Calcutta session. Though some Moderate leaders of the Congress also claimed to be the practitioners of the method of Passive Resistance, their major concern was to make petitions to the British authorities to get a grievance redressed. Tilak recommended that Indian nationalist leaders should give up the practice of petitions and prayers and should demand protection of Indian interests as a matter of political right. Thus, Tilak made the strategy of Passive Resistance more effective.

Tilak remained a vociferous supporter of his four-fold programme to realize the objective of Swaraj until 1916. Subsequently, he joined hands with Mrs. Annie Besant and some other activists and made certain modifications in his political strategy against the foreign rulers. The new political programme that he launched in April 1916, came to be known as Home Rule Movement. The most striking alteration which he made in the concept of Swaraj was the accommodation of the British Emperor as the head of Indian Home rule as well. Here, again

he justified his change of heart by using Hindu religious set phrases. He explained that it was not necessary to remove the deity of the temple but the priests should be changed. Here deity symbolizes the Emperor while priests represent bureaucracy. With the launching of the Home Rule Movement, the concept underwent a radical transformation. Now it came to mean as self-rule within the Empire. He started lobbying for the granting of British citizenship to Indians. Since 1907 he was not a part of the Congress. After 1916, however, he said that if the Congress agreed to adopt the Home Rule programme he would again work with the Congress. Tilak also agreed to work together with the British to implement the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. He explained that co-operation was a mutual concept and if the British authorities were willing to co-operate with the Indian leaders then Indians would also lend a helping hand to the Government. This approach came to be known as “responsive co-operation”. The Home Rule became extremely popular. It alarmed the authorities who resorted to suppress it. He made an appeal to the leaders of the British Labour Party to introduce a Bill in the Parliament about the Home Rule in India. In the new mode of the Home Rule, Swaraj’s objective became the formation of an American kind of federal government in India wherein the Government of India was to exercise through its Imperial Council the kind of powers that the American Congress was invested with.

The last major political act of Tilak was launching of a political party viz. the Congress Democratic Party with the intention of contesting elections that were to be held under the Reforms Act of 1919. In this connection he had also issued a manifesto of the Party that promised to spread education widely and extend the suffrage to more people. It also accommodated the concept of religious tolerance and extended support to the Muslims’ demand of restoration of Khilafat in Turkey. In those days Khilafat agitation was a major political issue in India because of Gandhi’s involvement in it. The manifesto emphasized that the new Party would help the Government to carry out the Reforms Act. It also pledged to work for the realization of a complete responsible government and for this purpose the Party would extend a helping hand to the Government if it sincerely made efforts to accomplish it or would resort to constitutional agitation if the authorities

refused to work towards it. The manifest encapsulated the declared actions of the party as to “educate, agitate and organize” in relation to rectify the flaws of the Act of 1919.

Tilak was undoubtedly one of the greatest freedom fighters who gave a definite direction to India’s freedom struggle in the last two decades of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries. He was the first important leader of the Indian National Congress who insisted on dealing with the British on equal footing. He exhorted the so-called Moderate and Liberal leaders to get rid of their inferiority complex. He criticized the Moderate faction of the Congress as it seemed to be ashamed of ancient socio-religious legacy of India. He presented an aggressive idea of nationalism that was rooted in spirituality and ancient Hindu traditions. It was not only his nationalism that had linkages with Hindu religion but most of his political ideas were embedded in dharma. He had a vision that the future Indian state would be firmly based on the sanatana dharma (the eternal faith) as propounded in the Vedas. His argument was that though the concept of Vedic dharma belonged to the Hindu faith, it was beneficial and relevant to the entire humanity. It was because of this reason he tried to merge the idea of nationalism with the Vedantic concept of harmony of humankind. For him the two notions were the two sides of the same coin. He strived to popularise the teachings of the Vedas and Bhagwad Gita with an aim to revitalize people with spiritual and moral energies that could be used for national struggle. At the expense of being labeled as revivalist, he went ahead to revive the positive and constructive traditions and practices of ancient Indian culture and creed.

Though his over-emphasis on interlocking Hindu beliefs with political issues may be debatable, his exhortation to seek pride in the philosophical and religious sources of ancient India inspired the nationalist leaders to give a truly nationalist orientation to our freedom struggle. The most striking contribution of Tilak was to convert the Indian National Congress from a debating club of the Westernized privileged class of Indians into a broad-based mass movement. He was also the first mass leader of national stature. It was because of his firm belief that no national movement could succeed unless it was backed by the power of the people, made him adopt a new political

strategy to which the common people could relate to. It explains his programmes such as organizing Ganesh Festival and Shivaji Jayanti as vehicles to promote political agenda. Though the Moderate leadership of the Congress did not approve of these strategies, Tilak could take his message to the common people and instill them with patriotic fervour. Tilak's point of view that the British would never protect or promote the economic and socio-political interests of the people was vindicated when Lord Curzon's administration adopted a ruthless anti-Indian approach in governance that was culminated in the partition of Bengal. This was the time when Tilak launched a sustained campaign against the British through his Marathi and English weeklies, his speeches and his actions. He exhorted his Liberal colleagues in the Congress to see the real face of British imperialism and give up their favoured strategies of prayers, petitions and constitutional methods. Though the Moderate leaders too were upset with the partition of Bengal, they refused to openly clash with the British.

The concept of Swaraj that Tilak was talking about since 1895, became the most popular political slogan of the nationalists in the aftermath of the partition of Bengal. Simultaneously, Tilak too became a household name across the country. This was the peak of Tilak's popularity as all the militant nationalists who were dubbed as Extremists and even some of the revolutionaries, who had a dream to expel the British from India through an armed struggle, regarded Tilak as their leader. In this sense Tilak was the first and only leader of national standing, before Gandhi, who posed a real threat to the continuation of the foreign rule in India. Though he did not openly support the 'bomb culture', he blamed the anti-people policies of the British for the rise of political violence in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab and other parts of India. It was because of such views that he had to pay a heavy price of solitary imprisonment in the inhospitable Mandalay prison in Burma. For Tilak, however, it was the highest sacrifice for the sake of the motherland.

Tilak's political ideas suffer from certain contradictions. In the earlier phase he appeared to be championing the cause of the Hindus in the aftermath of Hindu-Muslim riots that broke out in Bombay Province in the closing years of nineteenth century. Nevertheless, in the last phase of his political career Tilak made sincere attempts to

unify Hindus and Muslims to create a strong front of all Indians against the British. His Home Rule Movement was a watered down version of the earlier concept of Swaraj. Earlier he wanted political independence for India but in the Home Rule concept he had revised his intense anti-British stance and agreed to accommodate the King Emperor as the head of the British Empire of which India was to be a part.

There are some problems to prescribe his excessively dharmic ideas in a heterogeneous country like India. The Indian National Congress had reiterated on many occasions during the course of freedom struggle that an independent India will be a secular one. It made sense because of Indian plurality of race, religion, language and culture. Tilak's attitude to define nationalism as a concept derived from the Vedas and Bagwad Gita was not only unsuitable for a secular movement like the Congress but was also historically incorrect. Nationalism, like democracy, is a product of European history. What Tilak was trying to pass on as nationalism was more akin to Hindu unity against the foreigners. The introduction of Ganesh Festivals as part of the political struggle was also undesirable because it was obviously unification of religion and politics while a secular democracy must separate the two.

Tilak was definitely a prominent freedom fighter and his contribution in the political field can be hardly exaggerated. Nonetheless, on the issue of social reforms he was rigidly conservative. He opposed many progressive reforms that were endorsed by the liberals of the Congress. His argument that political emancipation should get primacy and social reforms should be deferred was not exactly a correct approach. For instance, a reprehensible practice like sati was banned by the intervention of the Company rule and the entire Hindu society welcomed the reform. Similarly, the Age of Consent Bill was a positive move to discourage the practice of child marriage. Tilak should not have opposed it. In this context, his argument that the sentiments and emotions of the people should be respected is in fact a line of reasoning against the very concept of reforms. Most people, either out of ignorance or orthodoxy, tend to oppose status quo in socio-religious matters. The leaders of a society have to educate them and make them see reason to make the reform movement successful. Instead if the leaders themselves give in



because of the orthodoxy of the people then there can never be reforms in society.

### Check your Progress

1. Elucidate Tilak's concept of Swaraj?

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### 7.6 SUMMARY:

Tilak was undoubtedly a fearless nationalist and the first mass leader among the freedom fighters in the true sense of the term. His nationalism was deeply rooted in religion. He was convinced that the true teachings of Hinduism underlined the importance of action against injustice and in support of his conviction he would often cite the message of Bhagvad Gita. He emphatically declared that religion could not be separated from politics. In order to unite Hindus, he started celebrating Shivaji Jayanti and Ganesh Festival. He always used Hindu symbols and idioms for achieving political aims. Despite basing his politics in Hinduism, his concept of nationalism was not anti-Muslim because he favoured extending all sorts of rights to all the people of India. He also emphasised the economic component of nationalist discourse. He fully endorsed 'economic drain theory' and wholeheartedly supported Swadeshi and Boycott Movement.

Popularising the concept of 'national education' was one of the three most important public activities of Tilak—the other two being Swadeshi and the Boycott Movement. When the British introduced modern, scientific education after 1835, the Bengalis were the first group of Indians who enthusiastically welcomed the new system of education. Tilak was, however, had reservations about exposing Indians completely to the kind of education the British introduced in India. Therefore, in order to make national education available to Indian students, Tilak in collaboration with his colleagues such as Chiplunkar and Agarkar got engaged in establishing education institutions for the purpose. The primary purpose of his project of national education was to make Indian youths aware of the past glories of their nation so that they could develop self-confidence. He was the major force in establishing New English School at Poona in 1880. Thereafter, with an aim of establishing institutions of higher learning he

incepted Deccan Education Society in 1884 under which Fergusson College was started the following year. Tilak's fundamental objection to British mode of education was that it ignored religious education. Moreover, to remove industrial backwardness of India he also started institution to impart industrial education. He recommended that the component of political education should be made obligatory in the scheme of national education.

Tilak was not very passionate about social reform movement. He was opposed to state intervention in religious and social affairs of the Hindus. His resistance to social reformers was because of a number of reasons such as: i) a plea to the state for reforms reflected inferiority complex on the part of reformers; ii) British were foreigners, exploiters and belonged to an altogether socio-religious background; iii) he was convinced that most reformers had a hidden agenda of anti-Brahminism; iv) most reformers were blind followers of Western religious and cultural values; v) most reformers were ignorant about Hindu philosophical and religious legacy. Many critics call him a reactionary Hindu. However, his opposition to the reform movement was mainly because he did not want the foreign rulers interfering in Hindu religious and social affairs. For him political freedom was the first priority. His contention was that reforms imposed by the foreign rulers did not have the real sanction of the people. There is no doubt that his position on certain issues makes him appear like a conservative Hindu who is interested only in maintaining the old Brahminical order. Though he was in favour of abolition of untouchability, he was not a social reformer in the tradition of Roy or Phule. He had absolute faith in the worth of Hindu philosophy and religion.

Tilak's major contribution to political thought was his concept of Swaraj. Like many of his other ideas, his concept of Swaraj was also embedded in Hindu religion. In his monumental work *Geeta Rahasya*—a commentary on Bhagvad Gita in Marathi—Tilak pointed out that his study of philosophy of Advaitism enlightened him about the worth of freedom. Tilak's concept of Swaraj included both the political rights of the individual and his dharma. He defined Home Rule as political as well as spiritual freedom. He declared that Swaraj would not be realized merely by achieving political freedom but spiritual freedom was equally important. For him Swaraj meant a politically independent nation ruled over by judicious rulers and morally and politically conscious people who could protect their dharma and political freedom. He also pointed out that in the immediate sense Swaraj could be defined as people's rule for which he recommended a four-fold

course of action comprising Swadeshi, Boycott of foreign goods, National Education and Passive Resistance.

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### 7.7 QUESTION

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1. Describe the salient feature of Tilak's idea of Swaraj and what course of action he recommended for its realisation?

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### 8.8 SUGGESTED READING:

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- 1 Wolpert Stanley, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1962
- 2 Bhagwat A K and Pradhan G P, *Lokmanya Tilak: A Biography*, JAICO
- 3 Bhattacharjee Arun, *The Prophets of Indian Nationalism*, Ashish Publishing House, Delhi, 1993
- 4 Cashman R L, *Myth of Lokmanya Tilak and Mass Politics in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975
- 5 Ghose Sankar, *Modern Indian Political Thought*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1967
- 6 Sathe, Shanta, *Lokmanya Tilak: His Social and Political Thoughts*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1994



## Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

### Unit Structure:

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Concept of Nationalism
- 8.3 On State:
- 8.4 On Society:
- 8.5 Critical Assessment
- 8.6 Summary
- 8.7 Suggested Reading

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### 8.1. INTRODUCTION:

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Aurobindo Ghosh's father, Krishnadhan Ghosh, belonged to an affluent family of Bengal. He was actively associated with the Brahma Samaj Movement. Nevertheless, after his return from England, where he had gone to seek medical education, he turned into a staunch admirer and practitioner of Western culture and values. His stay in England had made Krishnadhan Ghosh an ardent advocate of Western ideas, science and civilisation and he had made up his mind to bring up his children in absolute Western culture. He did not even approve of the modern educational institutions run by Indians and because of that Aurobindo, who was born 1872, and his brothers were first enrolled in convent schools administered by European and then sent to England for further studies. Aurobindo was admitted in the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling and barely at the age of seven was sent to England in 1879, where he was to be privately educated under the guardianship of a priest at Manchester. The priest, Mr. Drewett, first imparted Biblical teachings to Aurobindo and then introduced him to the literary classics, in particular, the works of Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats and others. Having taught Aurobindo for about six years Mr. Drewett's family migrated to Australia in 1885, as a result of which Aurobindo was admitted to St. Paul School in London. It was at this school that Aurobindo could study not only the English literary classics but also French literature and European history. He also acquired a reasonable proficiency in Italian, German and Spanish languages. He

started writing poetry and also got appreciation for his poetic creations from the peers and teachers.

Aurobindo had to face financial difficulties as his father was irregular in transferring money to him. However, these were offset when he was awarded by the management of St. Paul a modest scholarship to study the Classics for his final year school examination. Having completed school education, Aurobindo went to King's College at Cambridge where he bagged almost all the prizes for his literary and poetical excellence. He, now had begun to study European literature. In view of his artistic and literary bend of mind he was not inclined to join the administrative service. Nevertheless, because of his father's insistence he had to appear for the I.C.S. examination, which he cleared but flunked the horse riding test. He returned to India in 1893 and joined the Baroda civil service. During his long stay of fourteen years, Aurobindo had also developed contacts with the revolutionaries from India who were planning to start an armed revolution in India to drive the British out from the country. On their prompting Aurobindo had joined in England a secret society, "Lotus and Dagger", that helped him understand the true nature of the British rule in India. Thus, it was indeed an irony of history that Aurobindo who was exclusively brought up in Western culture and was exposed only to Western education, ultimately became a passionate adherent of Indian culture, philosophy and religious legacy. Moreover, his father who was completely anglicized and who did not want his sons to be exposed to Indian thoughts, education or culture, himself turned into an adherent of Indian philosophy and religions and had also developed a disliking for the British raj.

On reaching India, Aurobindo began studying the philosophical and religious tomes of India and then got drifted to political field. He had started taking interest in political affairs at the turn of the twentieth century but became very active after the partition of Bengal in 1905. In the words of Nehru, "His whole career in active politics was a brief one, from 1905 to 1910 when he retired to Pudicherry and devoted himself to spiritual and yogic exercises. During these five years he shone like a brilliant meteor and created a powerful impression on the youth of India." He first started editing a periodical, *Bande Matram*, which was dedicated to promote nationalist causes. Then he was offered the post of the Principal of a national college that he accepted. He wrote extensively on political issues during this period. He also delivered many speeches presenting the nationalist point of view in politics. His staunch opposition to the decision of partition of Bengal and his scathing criticism of the anti-people policies of the British bureaucracy

led to his arrest and imprisonment in Alipur jail in 1908. At this point of time Aurobindo was at the height of his popularity as the youths of India had made him their role model in the struggle against the foreign rulers. In jail, however, Aurobindo began studying mostly religious and spiritual material that brought a radical change in his attitude towards life. He realized that his true area of activity should be spirituality. In his words: "God seemed to whisper, 'I have had another thing for you to do, and it is for that I have brought you here, to teach you what you could not learn for yourself and to train you for my work'." On getting released Aurobindo said good bye to political and other affairs of life and devoted himself completely to yogic and spiritual issues. In April 1910, he settled in Pondicherry where he spent the rest of his life until his death on December 5, 1950.

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## **8.2. CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM:**

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Despite a brief spell of only five years in active politics, Aurobindo's position as a towering freedom fighter and ideologue of nationalism is firmly ensured. Aurobindo's concept of nationalism put him in the category of Indian thinkers and political activists who defined nation in spiritual terms. He rejected the notion of nationalism which was championed as a political strategy because Aurobindo believed that without combining the concept of nationalism with spiritualism and religious mysticism it would not be acceptable to the vast majority of Indians. In this context Aurobindo made the following statement: "India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the eternal religion, which is to harmonise all religions, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul." He, therefore, preached to the Indians that they should take part with all their physical and spiritual force in the movement of militant nationalism to, "create a nation, to consolidate an Age, to Aryanise a world." Aurobindo was a leading member of the Extremist group of freedom fighters and keeping tune with its traditions he too wanted to revive the socio-political and religious ideas and values of the Hindu past. Though he spent fourteen years learning Western languages, studying Western literary treasures and histories, he ultimately ended up rejecting most of the values and traditions of the West because of his belief that India was a different society and nation and the interests of India and England were not similar but contrasting. He was of the firm opinion

that the British raj ruined the prospects of spiritual and material freedom of the country. The movement of Hindu revivalism developed as a hostile response to Western imperialism which resulted ultimately in political extremism. Aurobindo's concept of nationalism was also an outgrowth of political extremism which he advocated in spiritual terms.

Aurobindo believed that India as a nation could be defined only in religious idioms. Consequently, he refused to accept or promote purely political and economic arguments against the continuation of the rule of the foreigners. Aurobindo, therefore, presented his notion of spiritual nationalism that was characterized by assertion, aggression and defiance of authorities. Aurobindo refused to treat India as a mere geographic entity; for him India was a motherland. He too, like Tilak and other Extremists, deified India as mother and naturally her exploitation and enslavement by the foreign rulers came to be regarded as a blasphemous act. Aurobindo's nationalism emphasized the moral and mental enrichment of the people as, he believed, that the moral and intellectual faculty of Indians got corrupt because of the materialistic influence of Western education. He argued that it was because of the Western education that the intellectual and spiritual legacy of India was never made available to the people of the country. His nationalism essentially aimed at bringing about a social and intellectual revolution in India. For him nationalism was an immortal phenomenon and not a transient political strategy to achieve a specific purpose.

In his book, *Idea of Human Unity*, Aurobindo described in detail his ideas about nation and nationalism. It is because of this work that some observers consider him as one of the prophets of Indian nationalism. While elaborating his concept of nationalism, Aurobindo completely rejected the notion of nationalism put forth by the Moderates and also criticized their methods of petitions and prayers. His ideas were not only extremists but bordered the revolutionary views of politics. In rejecting the Moderates, Aurobindo asserted that to struggle for anything less than complete freedom would be an insult to the greatness of our past and the splendid possibilities of the future. He was not ready to compromise on the ideal of Swaraj, which to him was, self-government as it existed in England or other sovereign states. He made it clear that his concept of Swaraj had no place of foreign control. He rejected political dominance of foreigners because he believed that Indian civilisation was much superior than that of the British. Explaining the spirit of nationalism, Aurobindo articulated: "We recognize no political object of worship except divinity of our motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and

no method of action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation.” Taking into consideration his views on nationalism we may say that he was far more militant and extremist than Tilak in this respect. Firstly, Tilak frequently defined his concept of Swaraj as self rule within the British Empire. Aurobindo, on the other hand talked about complete independence without any foreign control. Secondly, though Tilak did not condemn the use of violence by the revolutionaries during the agitation over partition of Bengal, he did not prescribe violent means to promote the cause of nationalis. Aurobind, unlike Tilak, kept his options open on this count. He was not ideologically opposed to the nature of the means so long as they served the purpose of national emancipation.

Aurobindo’s concept of nationalism made its full impact during the protests and agitation after the unfortunate division of Bengal. At that point of time he presented his notion of spiritual nationalism, which was simply the passionate aspirations of the people to realize the divine unity in the nation which would unify all the varied sections of society, different schools of political and economic thoughts as a solitary force of the nation. As it has been pointed out above that he deified the nation as mother, an idea that he borrowed from the Vedic teachings. In the context he observed: “Your common mother that is not merely the soil. That is not merely a division of land but it is a living thing. It is the mother in whom you move and have your being.” Now, the cult of the mother was widely popular among Hindus particularly in Bengal that helped Aurobindo’s concept of spiritual nationalism become extremely popular among the youths of India. In borrowing heavily from the ancient sources of Hinduism to give shape to his notion of nationalism Aurobindo joined the ranks of the revivalists because he intended to revive the ideals, values and standards of ancient India. At the same time he was a bitter critic of those who wanted to emulate the Western ideals and culture. Though, he was aware that India could borrow certain positive ideas and models from the West, he insisted that we should take, if at all we must, from the West as Indians and not get transformed as Westerners in the process.

Like the revivalists, Aurobindo identified nationalism with dharma. He observed that the birth of Hindu nation was analogous with the birth of sanatana dharma (eternal religion) and it grew with the santana dharma. Therefore, the decline of the sanatana dharma would mean the decline of Hindu nation and if sanatana dharma got perished, Hindu nation too would perish. He argued that the idea of nation was



immortal and in this context clarified, "...the three hundred million people of this country are God in the nation, something which cannot be measured by so much land or by so much money, or by so many lives. You will then realise that it is something immortal, that the idea of which you are working is something immortal and it is an Immortal Power that is working in you. The excessive use of Hindu idioms and notion that Aurobindo employed in defining nationalism might give an impression that his concept of nationalism was narrow and fanatically Hindu. It was not exactly so. On the contrary it was all-inclusive as Aurobindo stated that his idea of nationalism was based on love and brotherhood and its ultimate aim was not the unity of the nation but the unity of entire mankind. He argued that a mechanical concept of unity through political and administrative means could be easily achieved but the unity of entire mankind would only be possible if the religion of humanity was truly spiritualized and made inner force of mankind.

In order to realize his concept of nationalism, Aurobindo discarded the methods of the Moderates completely because he opined that their methods would not serve any purpose. He declared, "...merely by spending the ink of journalist and petition-framer and breath of the orator" India was not going to be emancipated. Instead he prescribed the principle of self-help and the method of Passive Resistance. Though he was not opposed to the use of violent means to achieve the independence of the motherland, he opted for Passive Resistance that, according to him, suited the circumstances then prevalent in the country. He was not a firm believer in the ideal of non-violence like Gandhi. In his essay on Bhagwad Gita he took the position that it was dharma yudh (crusade) to kill the enemies of the motherland. He emphasized that politics was the realm of the Kshatriya caste and the moral obligation of the Kshatriyas was to rule over the nation. Taking cue from the Gita he supported the method of Boycott. He said the Gita was the best answer for those who shirked from fighting the enemies of the country. Commenting on armed rebellion he said it was the "readiest and the swiftest, the most thorough in its results, and demands the least powers of endurance and suffering and the smallest and briefest sacrifices."

He also supported the method of non-cooperation as well as that of non-payment of taxes provided the Indians refused to be teachers in Government educational institutions, declined to serve in Government offices or rejected to man the police department of the foreign rulers. He justified the method of non-cooperation on the ground that it was not binding on the people of India to obey the laws made by the foreigners and imposed by the foreign authorities. If the law was unjust

and oppressive it was the duty of the people to passively disobey it and get ready to bear the consequent penalties and punishments. It must, however, be pointed out that the method of non-cooperation as prescribed by Aurobindo was different from that of Gandhi. Aurobindo did not disapprove of the violent means in the struggle against the British raj, For Gandhi, non-violence of an article of faith and under no circumstances Gandhi would recommend the use of violent methods. For Aurobindo, Passive resistance was only a stepping stone to achieve and even violent resistance depending on the circumstances. Aurobindo also believed: "Passive Resistance cannot build up a strong and great nation unless it is masculine, bold and ardent in its spirit and ready at any moment and at the slightest notice to supplement itself with active resistance. We do not want to develop a nation of women who know only how to suffer and not how to strike."

### 8.2.1 Check Your Progress:

1. Explain Aurobindo's concept of nationalism. What is its place in his spiritual ideas?

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2. "Aurobindo Ghosh is the best exponent in India of the spiritual conception of nationalism." Critically examine the statement.

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### 8.3. ON STATE:

It is quite surprising that Aurobindo who had presented a concept of spiritual nationalism and after retirement from active life himself became a sage dedicated to spirituality and mysticism, could not develop a spiritual or idealist theory of state in the traditions of

Hegel or Green. On the contrary his concept of state is very mechanical. His notion of state was an extension of his perception about the role of reason in the growth of social and political activities of man. While dealing with the notion of state Aurobindo brought into focus its negative features. He observed that for maintaining law and order and safeguarding lives and property, state had a monopoly of immense coercive power. He pointed out that in real practice state lacked a system of internal checks and reluctance. That, according to Aurobindo made the coercive power of the state frighteningly perilous. For him the state was a soulless contraption. He observed: "It (state) has no soul or only a rudimentary one. It is military, political and economic force; but it is only in a slight and undeveloped degree, if at all, an intellectual and ethical being. And unfortunately, the chief use it makes of its undeveloped intellect is to blunt by fictions, catchwords and recently by state philosophies, its ill-developed ethical conscience." Aurobindo emphatically declared that state did not represent the best mind and best idealism of a nation.

Aurobindo was deeply committed to the idea of individual freedom, which majorly influenced his concept of state. He pointed out that theoretically there could be many views about state but in practice it meant subordination of an individual to a collective political, military and economic egoism for the sake of collective ambitions that were imposed on the people by their rulers. He believed that the idea of state was inadequate to deliver the purported good of all. He opined that an organized state did not represent the best mind of a nation; it represented only collective egoism. According to Aurobindo state was a soulless entity while an individual had soul and also a set of moral and ethical standards. If at all state possessed a soul it was in a rudimentary situation. An individual, in the estimation of Aurobindo, was a being with a soul who has to realise his own truth as well as had to abide by the collective existence. He explained that an individual would demand freedom and a space for himself to satisfy his soul, to be honest to his nature. The deceptive idea that got the wider currency, believed Aurobindo, was that the state was greater than the individual and on such assumption the state was empowered with oppressive supremacy.

Aurobindo's understanding of state as a collective egoism led him to believe that the institution of state stifled the personality of individual and restrained him to be a perfect being. In this context Aurobindo defined Swaraj as inner independence of an individual and maintained that state i.e. collective egoism was hostile to let an individual have the inner independence. He, therefore, suggested that

the functions of the state should be limited. The state should be treated as a means to achieve the purpose of common development. In his words: “the state is a convenience and a rather clumsy convenience for one common development, it ought never be made an end in itself.” Thus the state has been reduced as a machine, a contraption, a point of reference for an individual to relate to others. Aurobindo, however, recognized the necessity of state on the ground that occasionally it helped individual and if it refrained from exercising unjust control it could serve a positive purpose. Aurobindo was in agreement to allow the institution of state for the realization of common development but he opposed to assign the state the position of an adjudicator in relation with inner independence of individual. He also rejected the popular view that state was the institution wherein the maximum human progress could be possible by terming it “an exaggeration and fiction.” Aurobindo opined that individual could develop himself individually and collectively but that collective institution was not state but community.

Aurobindo did not think that state was capable of developing individual perfectly or serving the common objectives of the community. What state at best could do was to remove the obstacles that might harm the working of a community. Beyond this there could not be any utility of the state. Aurobindo favoured limiting the functions of the state. He stated: “The business of the state so long as it continues to be a necessary element in human life and growth, is to provide all possible facilities for cooperative action, to remove obstacles, to prevent all really harmful waste and friction—and removing avoidable injustice to secure for every individual a first and equal chance of self-development and satisfaction to the extent of his powers and line of his nature.” The most significant point in the context was that Aurobindo further said, “To this extent the aim in Modern Socialism is right and good.” It reveals that Aurobindo favoured socialism as the suitable economic system for state.

Aurobindo emphasized that man did not owe his ultimate loyalty either to the state which was only a mechanism to achieve the common development or to the community which was only a part of life and not the whole. An individual should be loyal to the truth, the self, the spirit and the Divine which resided in him and in all other individuals. Nonetheless, it must be made plain that Aurobindo had totally rejected the notion of individual ego. He considered egoism harmful for human development. He observed: Liberty and equality, liberty and authority, liberty and organised efficiency can never be quite satisfactorily reconciled so long as man, individual and aggregate, lives by egoism...” Aurobindo suggested that an individual

should shun egoism and undergo a spiritual and psychological change by rising above communal identity to the level of fraternity of humankind with emphasis on inner oneness.

Liberty for Aurobindo was the freedom to abide by the law of our being. In other words he wanted each individual to grow to his natural self-fulfillment and “to find out naturally and freely our harmony with the environment.” He was not an anarchist to denounce the restrictions of the state imposed on individual’s liberty, however, he pointed out that the laws of the state were transitory, the stand-in for the true law that that should develop from within and it would not be an external restriction on individual freedom but would be its true expression. The real progress of human society would be achieved when law would become the child of freedom. The society would reach to its perfection when man would learn to become spiritually one with his fellowmen. In such a society man would experience genuine liberty which according to Aurobindo would be inner liberty. He conceded that outer liberty made available by the state was required but it would remain incomplete without inner liberty. In the phase when he had become a sage i.e. after 1910, Aurobindo consistently defined Swaraj as inner independence rather than freedom from foreign rule.

Aurobindo was critical of the Western concept of liberty which, according to him, was nothing but the exterior form of freedom. On the contrary, in his opinion, India had traditionally promoted the idea of Swaraj, which he defined as internal, moral and spiritual freedom. He conceded that India learned from the West the external kind of freedom but insisted that the West would learn from India the genuine concept of liberty i.e. inner freedom. He believed that the nation should first realise the objective of inner freedom then only it would feel free from within and without and then the nation would be really free. In order to realise inner freedom he suggested that we should recover the source of strength within ourselves and the other things such as social harmony, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought and the hegemony of the world would automatically follow. However, Aurobindo was quite aware of the enslavement of India at the hands of the British and for that reason he observed that under those circumstances Swaraj or inner freedom might not be available. In view of this Aurobindo recommended a co-relation between external and inner freedoms.

**8.3.1 Check Your Progress:**

1. Describe Aurobindo's views on the institution of State.

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2. Critically examine Aurobindo's theory of State.

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**8.4. ON SOCIETY:**

Aurobindo claimed that state and society were steps in the process of social and political evolution in the direction of divine perfection. He was of the opinion that societies were evolved. According to him the earliest societies were symbolic when rituals and symbols played the major role in social interaction. Then emerged societies that were characterized by the dominance of psychological and moral ideas. With the appearance of religion the societies were endowed with ethical standards and discipline. According to Aurobindo, the Hindu society with its varna-system and the dominance of the priestly class (Brahmins) was a form of Typal society. Soon enough, the Typal society got transformed into a settled society wherein rigid adherence to standards of behaviour was exacted from all sections of society. The rigidity of the system and hierarchical social order led to revolt as a result of which a Rationalistic-Individualistic society came into being. Aurobindo pointed out that the society in the West was at this stage of evolution. He added that because of Rationalistic-Individualistic society in the West, people there put a question mark before conventions and traditions and refused to accept anything that failed the test of rationality and reason. Such a society, in the opinion of Aurobindo, prefers to be governed by confirmable scientific principles and scientific laws.

Aurobindo contended that even the Rationalistic-Individualistic society of the West would undergo a change because it refused to accept the deeper truth that was beyond methods of scientific verification. Such a society, claimed Aurobindo, could only aspire for material progress and would strive to seek favourable markets by means of conquests where it could propagate competitive trade whereas the world was inhabited by unequal persons. According to Aurobindo the Western society basically failed to understand that the truth could be looked for by self development and not by vanquishing others. He recommended that the further progress of mankind was possible through intuitional process such as yoga that might help us to be in touch with our real self. In a real society, asserted Aurobindo, scientific reason got subordinated to the spiritual consciousness. He also clarified that self realization through exercises such as yoga would keep its practitioner in touch with the law of the community rather than alienating him from the corporate life. This could be possible when an individual while seeking self-protection by self-exercises would also help other members of the community in their endeavours for self-development. Aurobindo was striving to construct a holistic concept of human evolution leading to the Divine, the entity that brought together matter and spirit and also individual and community. He made it clear that since his conception of human unity could be achieved through yogic experiences, his notions could not be subjected to rational and empirical analysis.

It is important to know Aurobindo's philosophy of history while dealing with his concept of human unity. His basic thrust was that Nature through a lot of trials and hardships was engaged in creating human unity. As per his theory of human evolution he contended that the starting point of evolution was the decision of the Absolute Reality to manifest itself as the most impenetrable matter. Thereafter commenced the slow but definite process of evolution that would ultimately end at the point when the most developed entity would unify with the original source. Aurobindo claimed that for eons the densest matter remained static before evolving in the primitive life. Thereafter, again eons passed before the manifestation of mind in living beings. When the living creatures got conscious about their mental faculty, it was the starting point of the human race. Since that point human beings continued to evolve from lower levels of development to the higher ones. Nonetheless, the process of evolution, asserted Aurobindo, would not come to an end with the emergence of Rationalistic-Individualistic society. He claimed that the process of evolution would continue and the future stage of evolution would be the

emergence of super-mind that would usher in the resplendent realm of Truth-Consciousness.

In the earlier stages the process of evolution was slow because it was blind and unconscious. Aurobindo, however, clarified that future evolution would not be slow because the human beings had become sufficiently conscious to participate in and accelerate the process of evolution. He also claimed that through his philosophy of *Purna Yoga*, that included elements of Karma, Bhakti, Jnana, Raja-yoga as well as the Tantric principles (esoteric worship of the female goddess), the process of human evolution could be speeded up. Aurobindo opined that earlier attempts to build empires by means of conquests were extremely unrefined expressions of the evolution towards the ideal of human unity. These conquests did not display any conscious purpose towards human unity but their primary objectives were control of foreign markets and expansion of imperial power. The methods that were used in the conquests were uncouth, uncivilized and even barbaric because of which countless people were enslaved and their freedom was denied to them. He considered the attempts to unify nations on a common platform such as the League of Nations, were a part of the process of human evolution. He declared that the ultimate human unity would be spiritual and India because of its great spiritual heritage could play a major role in the realization of spiritual unity of mankind.

The next stage of human development would be a subjective one because it would be basically a spiritual evolution and not rationalistic or scientific. He observed that the age of reason was coming to an end and the cycle of soul was about to commence. In the final stage of human evolution the spirituality will be supreme that would transform human consciousness from the level of physical and materialistic to the spiritual one which would guide the man and make him realize that the remedy for self-enrichment was not the materialistic or economic prosperity or political dominance but the spiritual consciousness. He upheld that only through spiritual consciousness the aim of harmonious unity of mankind could be achieved. Aurobindo's emphasis on spiritual development of human beings was an exercise in making people understand that they should see themselves as constantly developing souls instead of regarding themselves as economic persons or political animals. Aurobindo reiterated the point frequently that Indians had the philosophical and intellectual background to understand the need for Human Unity and



they would have to be first of all politically free and they would be in a position to lead the rest of the world to the next level of human development that would create a universal spiritual society.

In the opinion of Aurobindo the only solution to the socio-economic upheaval in society could be located in the creation of a spiritualized society. In arriving at this conclusion he had considered and rejected the available alternatives. He pointed out that a communist form of government wherein economic planning would get prominence invariably resulted in authoritarianism. He was also skeptical about humanism because in his opinion a perfect society could not be created on the foundation of imperfect men. He also rejected the notion of a hedonistic or sociological ethics on the ground that they were bound by time and space and lacked universal characteristic. He remarked that though religion could create a reasonably acceptable society, it, more often than not turned into dogmatism. He, therefore, concluded that it was only a spiritualized society that would redress the socio-economic ills and evils of a nation. In this context he wished that the divine beings of the world who possessed super- minds should join hands for the purpose of making the world a better place

Aurobindo was aware that his ideal, the spiritual society, would not become a reality unless man's mind evolved to super-mind. If it happened then would emerge a race of true human beings who would be as different from ordinary human beings as human beings were from animals. Aurobindo emphasized that such a spiritual transformation could alone solve the evolutionary crisis. He was convinced that Nature was striving for materializing a super mental force on earth. These ideas were the offshoots of Vedanta and the philosophical ideas of the German thinker Nietzsche. The concept of a man with super-mind was borrowed from Nietzsche's 'Superman' while the spiritual character of society was taken from Vedanta. This intermixing of Eastern and Western ideas by Aurobindo made V. P. Verma remark; "Aurobindo made monumental attempt to bring together eastern and western political ideas. Ultimately, all political philosophers demand an element of faith. To a pure materialist, Plato, St. Augustine and Hegel sound reactionary; while to a spiritualist Machiavelli and Hobbes appear superficial. To a believer in the power of spirit, Aurobindo's philosophy has a great message."

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## 8.5. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT:

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Aurobindo belonged to the Tilakian school of politics not only because of his preference of extremist political means but also because of his spiritual, religious and cultural approach to explain socio-economic and political ideas. He was a highly educated man who had studied the masterpieces of the Western as well as Eastern intellectual heritage. His significance as a political thinker is also because he not only wrote about politics and economics of India but also participated practically, that too actively, in opposing the oppressive British rule. For such activities he had to suffer the indignity and hardships of imprisonment. He presented a spiritual concept of nationalism and social growth and many of his ideas in these contexts were absolutely original. His spiritual approach to politics was based on four major notions. The first of them was the concept of Sachidananda or Supreme Reality, which he explained in spiritual idioms as the force that remained the guide of the world of matter. Aurobindo, occasionally called it Brahma, the mind behind all minds which served as the common bond to keep all beings organically united. Aurobindo also said that the mind of an ordinary man needed a link between his ordinary consciousness and the Absolute Mind of Super-consciousness.

This link led to Aurobindo's second notion of spiritual politics i.e. Super-mind or Truth Consciousness. Aurobindo perceived the third concept of Human Evolution as the means with the help of which the consciousness would get liberated. Aurobindo could detect a clear purpose in Human Evolution that he defined a movement in the direction of the Divine. The human evolution, Aurobindo believed, was the outcome of the inclination from below as well as the upward pull from above that helped the lower forms to develop to the higher levels. Yoga is the fourth notion of Aurobindo's spiritual approach to politics. He defined Yoga as a means that would help a being transform from the materialistic level to that of spiritual. He established a lucid connection between human evolution, yoga and social change.

Aurobindo is popularly regarded as the prophet of Indian nationalism. Aurobindo viewed nationalism not merely as a political programme but as a matter of faith. He believed that nationalism was ordained by God. He, therefore, pointed out that political freedom was not only a political need but it was also a spiritual need. He was also convinced that having achieved political independence India would be in a position to lead the rest of the world towards a spiritual world. In

his active years of political extremism he would define Swaraj as self-rule but after 1910, he gave the concept a mystical touch. For him Swaraj in the real sense was inner independence of each individual. Similarly, after 1910, his idea of nationalism was exceedingly defined as the spiritual evolution of mankind as well as an instrument to achieve the concept of human unity. He, in the later phase, would define a nation as a shakti (spiritual force) that included the spiritual strengths of millions of people who belonged to the nation.

Aurobindo was one of the major thinkers that modern India had produced. Praising him Dr. S. Radhakrishnan called him as “the most accomplished of modern Indian thinkers.” Rabindra Nath Tagore called him as one of the messiahs of Indian culture and civilisation. Tagore wrote: “I said to him (Aurobindo) you have the word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world.” Aurobindo was an exceptional person because he was a militant nationalist, a great thinker, a harbinger of spiritual unity of mankind and also a great mystic, a yogi. Commenting on such a multi-faceted personality Deshbandhu Chitranjan Das summed up, “...long after he is dead and gone, Aurobindo will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and as the lover of humanity...his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India but across distant seas and lands.”

Aurobindo, without doubt deserved the rich estimations of his ideas and works and equally warmhearted tributes that were paid to him. He had seen best of both the worlds, East and West, and had perceptively analysed the relative merits and defects of the two civilisations. Nonetheless, if one makes a dispassionate analysis of his socio-political ideas he can hardly miss a pronounced strand of revivalism in all his ideas. His concept of nationalism was essentially revivalist because while delineating it he used terms such as yoga, Vedanta, tantra and sanatana dharma. He was also a passionate defender of Dayananda Saraswati revivalist movement. Though his revivalist ideas can be understood in the context of the oppressive British rule, they are likely to promote a religious and anti-scientific approach in the understanding of socio-economic and political ideas. Secondly, his observation that the Indian classics contained the high point of entire philosophical wisdom and any further pursuit in the field was not required was overweening and unreasonable. No serious scholar committed to scientific inquiry can accept such a conceited stance. Revivalism with a clear emphasis on the greater Indian intellect could lead to the rise of fascist tendencies because emphasis on the

superiority of their culture, religion and intellect is an unmistakable mark of the fascists.

Aurobindo was a great patriot and thinker but the revivalist ideas of any hue create problems for a pluralistic society such as India. The moment an ideologue starts seeking pride in the ancient glory of his historical heritage, the activists of other communities too become supremacists. This obviously results in fragmentation of society that helps separatist tendencies to flourish. Aurobindo's political and philosophical ideas have appeal for those who spiritually inclined. They, nonetheless, have very little to offer to scientific and empirical minds.

### 8.5.1 Check Your Progress:

1. Critically examine the foundations of the Indian polity as outlined by Aurobindo.

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2. Discuss the socio-political ideas of Aurobindo.

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## 8.6 SUMMARY

Aurobindo's spell in active politics lasted only for five years but his place as a leading freedom fighter and an ideologue of nationalism is firmly secure in the history of Indian political thought. His concept of nationalism was firmly embedded in spiritualism. He argued that a spiritual or religious concept of nationalism was necessary to make it acceptable to vast majority of Indian masses. He believed that Indian as a nation could be defined in religious idioms. His spiritual nationalism was characterised by assertion, aggression and defiance of authorities. Like Tilak he also deified Indian nation as mother

goddess. He was staunchly critical of the Moderates who viewed of nationalism in purely political and economic terms. He identified nation with dharma.

It is surprising that Aurobindo who developed a spiritual concept of nationalism and who in later led a life of mysticism did not favour a spiritual or idealist view of State like Hegel and Green. On the contrary his concept of State was very mechanical. In fact, his notion of State was an extension of his concept of reason in the growth of social and political activities of man. His passionate commitment to individual freedom was responsible for shaping his view of the State. He believed that the idea of the State was inadequate to deliver the good of all living in a society. State, according to Aurobindo, stifled the personality of individual and restrained him to be a perfect being. He did not believe that the State was capable of developing perfect individuals or serving the common objective of the community. He emphatically suggested that man did not owe his loyalty to State or Government

Society, according to Aurobindo, is an evolved institution. In his opinion the earliest form of society was symbolic in which rituals and symbols played major role in social interaction. At the next stage of evolution there emerged Typal society which was characterised by the dominance of psychological and moral ideas. He pointed out that Hindu society with its caste-system was a form of Typal society. Thereafter, Typal society got transformed into a Settled society wherein rigid adherence to standards of behaviour was implemented. Then, the people revolted against the excesses of a Settled society that led to the emergence of a Rationalistic-Individualistic society particularly in the West. Such a society prefers to be governed by the confirmable scientific principles. Rationalistic-Individualistic society, in the view of Aurobindo, could aspire only for the material progress of the community. He pointed out that the Real society could only emerge by subordinating scientific reason to spiritual consciousness.

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# 9

## Trust and Non-violence : Mahatma Gandhi

### Unit Structure

#### 9.1 Objective

#### 9.2 Introduction

##### 9.2.1 Writings of Gandhi

##### 9.2.2 Philosophical foundations of Gandhi's political thought

##### 9.2.3 Basis of Gandhian Philosophy

#### 9.3. Gandhian philosophy and views.

##### 9.3.1 Gandhi on theory of rights

##### 9.3.2 Gandhi's theory of democracy

##### 9.3.3 Satyagraha

##### 9.3.4 Gandhi as Secularist

##### 9.3.5 Social ideas of Gandhi

##### 9.3.6 Self-reliant villages

##### 9.3.7 Gandhi's theory of civilization and culture

#### 9.4 Evaluation

#### 9.5 Relevances

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### 9.1 OBJECTIVE

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This unit deals with Mahatma Gandhi and his views, philosophical foundation of his thought. We will understand the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's thought.

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### 9.2 INTRODUCTION : (1869-1948)

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#### Life

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is called as "Mahatma" was born on the 2nd October 1869, at Porbandar in Kathiawad. Gandhiji was not a systematic Philosopher of the academic type. But certainly he has stressed some fundamental ideas for the regeneration of man and the reconstruction of society and politics, and in this sense he can be regarded as a moral, social and political thinker.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's philosophy has stressed some fundamental ideas for the regeneration of man and the reconstruction of society and politics.

Like Buddha and Socrates, Gandhi only stressed certain basic values. He was a man of action and a leader who wielded considerable influence over men. Gandhi's greatness lay in his lofty character, his political and moral leadership, his inner experiences and his message of truth and Ahimsa.

The writings of Gandhi touch almost all the social, educational, cultural, economic and political problems of contemporary India. Gandhi has expressed many ideas which are highly useful and relevant to the modern age.

In the writings of Gandhi, we find the attempt to win the hearts of the readers by revealing to them his own experiences gained through "experiments in the search of God as Truth through Ahimsa. He fought the battle of India's freedom with the weapon of non-violence. In South Africa, through the satyagraha movement, Gandhi rendered great service to the cause of racial equality. The South African Satyagraha was the first example of the political application of non-violence on a great scale. After that Indian politics had been a laboratory in which he experimented Indian values in the form of new techniques.

Thus the uniqueness of Gandhi's leadership lay in his successful application of the techniques of non-violent satyagraha to the political and social spheres. He preached and practised Truth and Ahimsa.

Gandhi had touch with rural India. After his return from South Africa in 1915, he undertook the tour of the country on the advice of his 'Political Guru' Gopal Krishna Gokhale. In this tour Gandhi got first hand understanding of the people of India and their problems. It made him closer to the Indian reality.

Gandhi gave to the Indian people a concrete and comprehensive programme of change. He advocated village regeneration and uplift, Khadi and cottage industries, basic education, the abolition of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity and the winning of Indian independence.

### **9.2.1 Writing of Gandhiji**

Newspapers and weekly

In South Africa, he edited newspapers and weekly "The Indian Opinion", "The young India" and in India 'Harijan'

Books 1) Autobiography "The story of My experiments with Truth."

2) Hind Swaraj"



Gandhiji was no academic thinker but essentially a man of action, a Karmayogi, whose social and political ideas were developed in the course of the various campaigns conducted by him in South Africa and India. His method was experimental and scientific, He did not write a treatise on political philosophy.

His book contains some permanent message for humanity. His views found expression in his autobiography and his articles in 'young India' and "Harijan" and his speeches.

Some parts of the Gandhian teachings were meant for the solution of certain immediate problems, but the great importance of Gandhism lies in the renewed stress on some of the permanent elements like truth, non-violence and purity of ends and means.

### **9.2.3 Philosophical Foundations of Gandhi's political thought -**

In his book 'My Experiments with Truth' he has mentioned various sources which have influenced his thinking which Gandhi was deeply devoted to religion in the sense of self-realization through a moral life and service of the people.

He was greatly influenced by his parent, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagwad Gita and the stories of Shravana and Harishchandra. From his childhood all above religious books inculcated in him a deep conviction in the supremacy of truth as the essence of all morality.

In England he became acquainted with important religious books. He eagerly read Edwin Arnold's "The Song Celestial and The light of Asia. He met Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Annie Besant, the two towering spokeswomen of Theosophy. His study of Blavatsky's key to Theosophy stimulated in him the desire to make deeper studies of Hinduism.

In south Africa his contacts with Moslem friends induced him to study Islam and he read translation of the Koran. Thus he made comparative study of religions. He also read Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is within you and the Gospel in Brief. and was greatly influenced by these books. Gandhi read Ruskins book "Unto This Last". Gandhi's economic philosophy was inspired by Ruskin's Philosophy.

### **9.2.3 Basis of Gandhian Philosophy**

Gandhian Philosophy is based on following principles

- 1) Truth
- 2) Ahimsa
- 3) Purity of Ends and means

1) **Truth** - It is final goal of Gandhian thought. According to him God is truth. God to Gandhi is a self-existent, all knowing living force. Gandhi always maintained that truth is God. Truth, according to Gandhdi, is not only the supreme existence but also the 'chit' or the highest consciousness.

Gandhi said, Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception. Truth is the eternal principle, that is God.

For achieving Truth Gandhi stressed on following

1) Prayers -

Gandhi always offered prayers to God every morning and evening.

2) Dedicated humanitarian service and self-contemplation - Besides prayers he stressed on dedicated humanitarian service for the realization of God.

3) Purity of personal life

Purity in thought, mind and body i.e. application of Ahimsa.

He said if man sincerely started the journey on the path of moral purification, the vision of God would begin to dawn slowly on him. Gandhi became a political leader in the process of serving the people as a means to realise God. He rose as the protector and defender of liberty and equality in South Africa and in India.

Gandhi's aim was the realization of God through service of mankind. Service or seva is certainly one of the key words in the philosophy of Gandhi. According to him, social betterment depends upon individual efforts for self-purification.

Gandhi had immense and profound attachment to the Bhagvadgita. He regarded it as his spiritual dictionary which he consulted for guidance on all problems.

Gandhi believed in the sanctity of eleven great vows. These are explained below -

- |        |   |  |
|--------|---|--|
| Satya  | - | It signifies absolute adherence to the supreme truth and reality which is god.   |
| Ahimsa | - | It means not only non-hatred and non-violence at all levels and in relation to all living creatures but the positive and absolute law of |

	creative love. Doing good to the opponents.
Brahmacharya	- It implies complete restraint over all sense organs.
Asvada	- Control of the palate.
Asteya	- Non-stealing.
Aparigraha	- Non-accumulation. One should not possess anything which is not absolutely essential.
Abhayam	- Fearlessness
Swadeshi	- It means not only the use of articles produced in one's country but also desire to serve one's immediate neighbourhood.
Bread Labour	- It implies that everybody must do some productive manual work everyday.
Sarvadharm Samabhava	- It means not merely the negative concept of the toleration of the religions of other people, but a genuine reverence for all religions and their scriptures.
Asprishyata Niwarana	- The removal of untouchability.

Before Gandhi, non-violence and above other principles were used for personal action and motivation but Gandhi transformed these principles into a social and political technique. According to Gandhi Truth and Non-violence are the two sides of the same coin. He said "God is truth and truth is God." and when you want to find truth as God, the only means is love and non-violence. Way to God is observance of Ahimsa and service of mankind. Truth is the highest law of our life and Ahimsa is the highest duty. Gandhi stressed on purity of ends and means. He believed that both are complementary to each other. He said 'End' is not in our hands whereas 'Means' are in our control and hence we should keep them pure. Gandhi repudiates the doctrine that the end justifies the means. Truth and non-violence were the twin instruments on which Gandhiji relied for transforming both the individual and society.

Both in South Africa and India he stressed on the purity of means for the realization of his political objectives.

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### 9.3 THEORIES AND PHILOSOPHY OF GANDHIJI

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Gandhiji's approach was empirical. His political and social propositions are based upon his own observations and experiences. eg. His stress on the removal of untouchability, his plea for communal harmony and his emphasis on rural reconstruction are based upon the lessons derived from his experiences as a social and political leader.

#### 9.3.1 Gandhi on Theory of rights -

One of the prime themes in Gandhi's political Philosophy is the conception of rights. His entire theory of Satyagraha is based on the notion of the individual's natural right to resist a coercive system.

- a) Unconditional obedience to the determinate political superior had no place in Gandhian thought.
- b) He stressed on the equal rights of man. Hence in south Africa he fought for civil rights of the Indians. In India he fought for political, social rights of the people.
- c) He also stressed the co-relation between the rights and obligations. e.g. concept of Sarvodaya is based on this.
- d) With political freedom Gandhi stressed on economic freedom. - Gandhi wrote "political freedom has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness." Every person should get enough remuneration to feed himself and his family. A government that does not ensure this, is no government. It is anarchy, such a state should be resisted peacefully.
- e) Gandhi also stressed on moral freedom. It means conquest of the demands of the senses and the appetites, for the realization of the self. Hence he stressed on the rigid adherence to the code of eleven great vows in his Ashrama.
- f) Gandhi's concept of rights is related to equality and justice. He said that political freedom without social and racial equality is illusory. According to him every man is equal in the eye of God. Hence every man should be legally and politically equal. He had respect for equality and dignity of the human beings. He suggested equal opportunities for the growth of the individual. He was against racial, caste, religious, class, discrimination.

#### 9.3.2 Gandhi's Theory of Democracy :

- a) **Gandhi was critique of western democracies.** He opposed to the procedures and practices of British parliamentary democracy.

He said "the people of Europe have no doubt political power but no real swaraj." According to him western democratic politics infected by two factors. First they believed in the limitless expansion of capitalism and exploitation of the weaker. Secondly it had tendencies of imperialism. Hence European democracies are a negation of democracy.

b) Gandhi stressed on following points for establishing democracy in India-

- 1) Political decentralization in the form of village Panchayat - Development of self-sufficient villages.
- 2) Economic decentralization - Village economy should be based on agriculture, handicraft etc.
- 3) Basic education - Education should be based on experience and work. Gandhiji stressed on compulsory primary education acquiring some skills.e.g. social equality
- 4) Removal of untouchability.
- 5) Communal harmony.
- 6) Non-violent organization of labour.
- 7) Renunciation of power-politics - He pleaded for pure selfless service of the people.
- 8) Self-sufficient villages - Gandhiji believed that urbanization was one of the important factor responsible for the growing poverty of India. He said democracy reforms should be from bottom.

Thus Gandhi stressed on the gradual replacement of the top heavy, parliamentary structure by a co-operative federation of self-managing village. republics.

9) Gandhi's concept of Ramraj or non-violent state - Gandhi considered the state as an organization of violence and force. Hence he stressed on elimination of the coercive state by increasing observance of non-violence in political action and minimum powers to the government. He opposed to the power politics.

10) Concept of Swaraj-

According to Gandhi political independence was not an end in itself but was the first step for Swaraj. By Real Swaraj Gandhi meant the welfare and happiness of the masses. It will come only when the masses would acquire the capacity to resist the authority when abused. Swaraj Includes a square i.e. political, economic, moral and social uplift and independence. He said spirit of democracy must come from within the individual, it can

not be brought by external institutions. According to Gandhi politics is not art of getting power and prestige but is the pathway to social service. Hence he wants to raise politics to a dignified. He felt that the world could be perfected if men determined to live according to moral values. He always gave importance to religious consciousness, personal purification and morality of the state.

### 9.3.3 Satyagraha

#### a) Introduction

After the completion of his studies in law in England, Gandhiji went to South Africa to attend legal matters of his client. There he was involved in a struggle against the racist-white minority government to uphold the human right and the dignity of the non-whites. In the course of his struggle, he evolved the technique of Satyagraha for resisting injustice.

#### b) Meaning

It is based on the principle of 'purity of ends and means' He said Satyagraha is nothing but tapasya for truth and justice. It is a weapon based on truth non-violence and self suffering to fight against injustice. It is the wepon of the non-voilent struggle.

#### c) Steps

Satyagraha have three steps :

- 1) Persuading the opponents through reasoning and being open.
- 2) Appealing to the opponents through the self-suffering of satyagrahis. It is an appeal to Man's person.
- 3) Non co-operation and civil disobedience.

#### d) Techniques of Satyagraha are as follow :

- 1) Non-co-operation such as hartal, boycott
- 2) Civil-disobedience such as non-payment of taxes, defence of specific laws.
- 3) Fasting prayers, pledges
- 4) Hijrat - Peacefully stoppage of work
- 5) Strike
- 6) peaceful piketing
- 7) peace brigade - a type of non-violent army.
- 8) Boycotts
- 9) Processions

Gandhiji used all these methods of satyagraha against the British rule. He believed that the British rule depended on the cooperation of

the people of India. The British rule will not last even for a single day, if people become fearless and refuse to cooperate with the (unjust) and the tyrannical British Government.

The non-cooperation movement of 1921 failed to achieve the goal of Swaraj within one year. But it made some contribution to the Indian national Movement.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was launched by Gandhiji on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1930 by breaking the Salt Act at Dandi. The Civil disobedience movement was a total success and had paralysed the British Government

In 1942, the Quit India Movement started and Gandhi gave the battle cry of do or die. It created an intense and widespread anti-British feeling in India.

e) **Conditions of Satyagraha –**

It is a birth-right of a person. But requires following :

1) Self-suffering -

In this satyagrahi make direct appeal to the soul of oppressor and bring moral pressure on the opponents. Hence, capacity to bear is necessary.

2) Unshakable faith in God

3) Fearlessness - Free from passions, emotions and fear

4) Patience and determination

5) It is 'love process and appeal to the heart

6) Satyagrahi must not hanker after wealth and fame.

7) Inner purity

8) Causes of satyagraha should be legitimate and just.

9) For the success of satyagraha it is essential to mobilise the force of public opinion.

10) Forgiveness

11) Careful study of situation

12) No secrecy.

Thus Gandhi was inventor of the new weapon of Satyagraha which is based on Non-violence. Actually the use of the weapon of non-violence is not new. It was used by Mira, Christ, Socrates. But its scope was limited to individual. Gandhiji expanded its sphere and applied it to political and social actions. Satyagraha is used all over the world.

Now it is a technique of revolution and fighting. It is a weapon of resistance which is based on non-violence.

**e) Satyagraha is based on following assumptions**

- 1) Truth abides
- 2) Human being is good evilness in man is temporary
- 3) Can be use by all, in all circumstances. Application is universal
- 4) Should be used as last resort.
- 5) Life is one and integrated Unity of life.
- 6) Not coercion or blackmail It did not threaten other.
- 7) Belief in natural rights of man

Thus resistance on moral grounds is one of the greatest contribution of Gandhi to political thought. Today it has become an instrument of struggle for fundamental change.

**9.3.4 Gandhi as secularist**

He said in Indian context 'secular state' stands for non-discriminatory state. The need of the moment is not one religion but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of different religions. We want to reach not the dead level, but unity in diversity.

Secularism is a reflection of an individual's attitude and his way of looking at life. It has to be reflected in the society as also in the citizens dealing with each other.

According to him, for secularism following factors are necessary -

- 1) Separation of state and religion
- 2) People should have secular attitude
- 3) Ban on religion based political parties.
- 4) From childhood, tolerance and goodwill should be taught.
- 5) Ban on growth of new religious institutions.
- 6) Religious institutions misuse should be prohibited.

According to Gandhi religion is a way of life, hence for him it meant truth, Ahimsa, self-realization. He viewed all the religions of the world as branches of one and same tree. Gandhi was mainly concerned with the ethical aspects of religion. According to him religion and morality are the same interchangeable terms. For Gandhiji not theology but morality was the core of religion. He assimilated religion with politics and public life. According to Gandhi, religion and politics cannot be separated because both persue the same ideal i.e. service of humanity.



### 9.3.5 Social ideas of Gandhi

Gandhi gave importance to social reforms alongwith political movement. He thought political movement cannot succeeded without unity in society and individual awareness. He said society cannot become strong unless untouchability is eliminated, position of women is improved and communal unity is achieved. He thought that swaraj was not possible without inner strength of the nation.

Hence, his constructive programme of training people for Satyagraha included following social reforms -

- 1) Abolition of untouchability
- 2) Promotion of communal harmony.
- 3) Improve the position of women.

While doing these social reforms Gandhi tried to bring radical change in internal nature of man. Because he believes that once the inward spirit is changed the outward form will take care of itself.

#### **Abolition of untouchability -**

He suggested following remedies to remove untouchability-

- a) Tried to change the inward nature of the people. - He wrote article in the newspaper and tried to change the attitude of the people.
- b) Admission to untouchables in temple.
- c) Improving their economic conditions and giving them political rights and education.
- d) Adoption of Harijan children.
- e) Advised the Harijans to give up carrion eating, liquor drinking etc.

### 9.3.6 Self-reliant villages -

Gandhi firmly believed that self-reliant villages form a sound basis for a just, equitable and non-violent order. This can be a guiding principle for all citizens, and policy makers in India.

After returning from South Africa, Gandhiji developed his ideas on villages from his direct experiences. He was convinced that "If the villages perish, India will perish too, and India's own mission in the world will get lost."

For him, rebuilding of the nation could be achieved only by reconstructing villages. He himself initiated such efforts at certain places. It means Gandhi wanted to rebuild India from the lowest level with poorest and the weakest. He had visualised self-reliant villages, free from exploitation and fear as an important part of the decentralised system. He stood for safeguarding the integrity and foundations of

villages. He saw India lived in the villages. Hence, his slogan was 'Back to the villages.'

He felt that strengthened and economically sound village economy would revitalize our democracy. He condemned 19th century doctrine of 'laissez-faire' and advocated the revolutionary doctrine that "Land belongs to him who tills it" and charkha as the means of helping our people and symbolized the dignity of labour. He accepted the concept of economic equality and equal distribution, society on the basis of co-operation, love, equal treatment, non accumulation, non possession etc.

The true nature of the new socio-economic order which Gandhiji aimed at establishing would be better understood if we keep before our mind the main evils or social sins from which the present day society suffers and which he would have excluded from it. These sins are

- 1) Politics without principles.
- 2) Wealth without work.
- 3) Pleasure without conscience
- 4) Knowledge without character
- 5) Commerce without humanity
- 6) Science without humanity
- 7) Worship without sacrifice.

### **9.3.7 Gandhi's theory of civilization and culture :**

Gandhi judged things by the criteria of simplicity, morality. Gandhi was a humanitarian and an ethical universalist hence he pleaded for tolerant attitude to the cultures of the world.

Gandhi believed in the spiritual and ethical foundation of civilization and was the prophet of 'true civilization'. According to Gandhi basic principles of true civilization are –

- 1) limiting our wants
- 2) Avoiding life-corroding competition
- 3) Preventing conditions which will lead to exploitation and injustice.
- 4) subordinating 'brute force' to 'Soul force'
- 5) Progress of human civilization is to be measured in the scale of ethics, and not in the scale of pure materialism
- 6) There is a quest for truth as reality in place of external illusory charms and fascinations.

7) Quest of simplicity -

Gandhi condemns luxury. According to him engrossment in vanities, luxuries and wealth is degrading and demoralizing.

8) Stressed on synthesis of spiritual and temporal elements -

Gandhi was a saint but his interest in the values of social and economic justice, political liberty and human unity was profound and continued till the end.

He said progress of human civilization is not to be measured in the scale of pure materialism. True civilization consists not in the accumulation of commodities but in a deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants.

Gandhi had a moral approach to civilization because he accepted a spiritual interpretation of the universe and history. According to him a civilization without ethics would be sterile and doomed to destruction.

Gandhi was a critique of western civilization. He opposed the worship of wealth, political power. He saw destructive tendencies in this culture. He condemned modern civilization not because it was western or scientific but it was materialistic and exploitative. It made human beings body-centred, self-centred, placed materialistic wants over spiritual values, it made man a slave of many luxuries and divorced from ethics and morality.

#### 9.4 EVALUATION :

Gandhi said, "I do not claim to have originated any new principle. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truth to our daily life and problems. Well, all my philosophy is contained in what I have said. You will not call it 'Gandhism' there is no 'ism' about it. (Harijan' 28th March 1936)

It means Gandhi was not a system builder. He was a man of action. He first acted and then tried to explain his action in terms of thought. He applied moral values in every walk of life and problems. Gandhiji was not an academic thinker but a man of action, whose social and political ideas were developed in the course of the various campaigns conducted by him in South Africa and India for relieving the distress of the poor and the oppressed.

Gandhi uses the words "Truth and God" as synonyms. The word 'Truth' derives from 'sat' which means to exist or reality.

He said the search for truth is an all-inclusive process. Knowledge plays a part in it only. Man searches for truth with his whole

personality. With the harmony between thought, word and deed. To think one thing, to speak a second and do a third is a lie. Secondly Gandhi says that we cannot put social, economic, political or religious activities into watertight compartments. A man cannot be merely religious for a few hours a day then an economic person for the rest of the time. Thus according to Gandhi 'Truth' is the goal of life and non-violence is a means or a method of realizing this goal. Gandhi applied these principles to political economic and social institutions. While applying these principles in social and political field, he developed various ideas and concept. These are as follows

- 1) Gandhi on theory of Rights.
- 2) Gandhi's theory of democracy
- 3) Concept of Swaraj
- 4) Satyagraha
- 5) Gandhi as secularist
- 6) Social ideas of Gandhi
- 7) Trusteeship
- 8) Self-reliant villages
- 9) Gandhi's theory of civilization and culture
- 10) Concepts of Sarvodaya

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## **9.5 RELEVANCE**

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In face of the advancements in nuclear energy Gandhi stood for the resort to technics of life and non-violence, because he was deeply concerned with the survival of man. Both in South Africa and India he stressed the purity of means for the realization of this political objectives. He always stressed on supremacy of ethical values.



# 10

## Truth and Non-violence and Gandhian Ideas

### Unit Structure

- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Introduction
- 10.3 Sarvodaya
- 10.4 Satyagraha
- 10.5 Trusteeship
- 10.6 Restriction of Individual needs
- 10.7 Ethics in politics
- 10.8 Concept of politician
- 10.9 Civil state and society
- 10.10 Village Panchayat or decentralization of Political power
- 10.11 Decentralization in economic Field
- 10.12 Theory of Social change
- 10.13 Concepts of constructive Programme
- 10.14 References

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### 10.1 OBJECTIVE

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To study evolution of Gandhian Philosophy

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### 10.2 INTRODUCTION

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Mahatma Gandhi was a humanist and radical revivalist who fought not only against the colonialism and imperialism, but also against the superstitious practices, religious hatred and casteism in India

He was a realist, he did not believe in armchair theorizing, His action and experience characterizes the political philosophy of Gandhi.

It is a difficult task to redefine Gandhi's thought in a schematic manner. Gandhi's thought is a three dimensional one : Individual, Societal and ecological dimensions integrated into a whole. That is why Gandhi remains a much more complex thinker. It is difficult to pinpoint the crux of Gandhi's concepts. He has brought a large number

of concepts from the Indian traditions but redefined these concepts. Moreover, he has added some new concepts Gandhi has developed his thought in a definite conceptual framework which is his own.

The Significant aspects of Political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi are as follows :-

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### 10.3 SARVODAYA

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The two terms in Sarvodaya are **Sarva** (all) and **Uday**, (rising). The literal translation of Sarvodaya would then be the 'rising of all'. This rising has physical and material dimension but at its base it is spiritual enlightenment that brings about changes in the physical and material aspects. Although Gandhi translated Sarvodaya as the welfare of all. Such welfare would be the result of enlightenment.

Gandhi developed the concept of sarvodaya from Gita and from his experience, Having western education abroad gave him a chance to have a close observation of the different facets of capitalism. capitalism breeds poverty, exploitation, inequality and ignore needs of a community. It turns him a critic of capitalism, Sarvodaya is based on the concept of the unity of existence.

According to him individual labour creates capital, But capital has a social utility, Gandhi reconstructed the concept of private property. One can have private property but not for one's use. It should be utilized for social needs.

Gandhiji Belived in the doctrine of limits. Self regulation of one's needs help onself in creating a sarvodaya. One should limit one's property and practise self-renunciation. He realized that property causes worry and is responsible for many of the anti-social activities. Hence for the establishment of Sarvodaya Gandhi put forward the concept of trusteeship.

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### 10.4 SATYAGRAHA

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Satyagraha has often been translated as "holding fast to truth". Gandhi began practising some form of Satyagraha in South Africa. Later he began to propound its conceptual and theoretical foundations.

To be a Satyagrahi one has to practice the principles or non-violence (ahimsa). Gandhi never violated the basic principle in his whole life. When the people in non-cooperation movement turned violent, he withdrew the political movement. For practising it, one has to observe; restrain in one's actions. Practising non-violence does not show any weakness but only strength.

All these concepts analysed above are a part of the Indian traditions but Gandhi brought them to a higher level by providing universal meanings.

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## **10.5 TRUSTEESHIP :**

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In the case of Gandhi, being and becoming have a dialectical relation. His thought evolves out of his own life experiences, but at the same time, his life experiences affect his thinking. Till his death, Gandhi was experimenting with truth. His commitment to truth was total. Gandhi constructed the theory of 'Sarvodaya' out of his own experience. Having western education abroad gave him a chance to have a close observation of the different facets of capitalism. Western capitalism breeds consumerism and accumulation of private capital. On the level of political thought, individual remains as the centre of political constructs. Needs of a community and society get ignored. Gandhi turns into a worst critic of capitalism. He propounded a theory of social capital. He accepted the basic underlying principle of capitalism in the questions of human labour. Moreover, individual labour creates capital. But capital has a social; utility. Society has a right over the individual capital. On the level of distribution, market should have a restricted role. Human consciousness has a role to play. Individual because of a higher level of consciousness, allows the community to use one's own property. Human initiative should not be lost at any point. Gandhi reconstructed the concept of private property. One can have private property but not for one's own use. It should be utilised for society's needs. That is why individual needs need to be restricted to the minimum. Gandhi's statement on economic equality is worth quoting.

Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility. So long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists". Thus Gandhi's concept of trusteeship is a substitute for the social model. He said economic growth may push up the national income but it may not touch poverty.

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## 10.6 RESTRICTION OF INDIVIDUAL NEEDS HAS AN ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION.

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Expansion of one's needs is taking a toll on the ecology. Ecological dislocation is a violent act against other species. Gandhi has a high regard for other living beings. Concern for wildlife makes him conscious of the ecology. Thus, he pleads for restriction of human needs to the minimum. Gandhi's view on vegetarianism is the product of his own ecological experience. Vegetarianism will not create so much problems for ecology. Wearing khadi is a part of his philosophy which also suits the needs of human ecology. Dislocation on global ecology starts when individual needs go on expanding. In result, ecological disturbances affect the society negatively.

"Moreover, human consciousness must grow in a binary model of self and the other. In relating to others, enrichment of soul is possible. Serving others is a moral duty of every individual. Moreover, creation of poverty is the result of the individual hunger for wealth. Service to the poor is the service to God. Daridraparayan Seva is a part of our old civilization.

While in South Africa, Gandhi put into practice his various ideas. Individual can own private property but while putting it for personal use, one should use one's conscience. Right of using one's property for personal use is questioned in Gandhi's view. Others have a right over the rich man's property for their use in satisfying their personal needs. There is a distance between individual needs and societal needs of violence. A non-violent social order can be created on the basis of satisfaction of minimum needs of all. Self regulation of one's needs help oneself in creating a Sarvodaya. When a rich turns unethical and becomes acquisitive in nature, a poor has very right to protest against him. Gandhi categorically states that if the rich do not become trustees of their wealth and share it with the poor, "non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience (is) the right infallible remedy, for the rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society." Gandhi developed his concept of trusteeship which is the economic principle in creating a Sarvodaya society. An industrialist should feel like a trustee of his property. Although he owns the property but as a trustee he cannot use the property as he likes.

When the owners of property violate the basic principles and misuse the property, then the poor masses have a right to protest against this. They can hold Satyagraha in a non-violent manner. Satyagrah remains the central element of Gandhi's political philosophy. To go for Satyagrah one must be an ethical being and committed to the truth. Fighting for truth is one's natural right. Individual or masses



can go for Satyagrah in restructuring a society but without violating the basic principles of non-violence.

"Gandhi's concept of Satya with ahimsa as the means, determined his doctrine of Satyagraha or active resistance to authority. While the concept of ahimsa with Satya as the common end enabled him to formulate his doctrine of Sarvodaya or non-violent socialism." Gandhi's economic thought was moulded by Ruskin. It is pointed out that Gandhi gave the title of Sarvodaya to his Gujarati translation of John Ruskin's **Unto this Last**. Ruskin's book influenced Gandhi. He learned three things from it. These are as follows:

- 1) The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- 2) A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their labour.
- 3) That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and handicraftsman is a life worth living.

Moreover, Gandhi believes in the goodness of everybody. Human labour is the basis of any social formation. Labour of an unskilled and skilled worker is equal. There is no difference between mental labour and manual labour, In other words, Gandhi's concept of labour is social labour which produces wealth having the same market value; the form of labour does not matter.

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## 10.7 ROLE OF ETHICS IN POLITICS

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The greatest contribution of Gandhiji to political theory is the spiritualization of politics. He stressed on purity of ends and means. He said the means must be ethically right. If not, the end itself loses its value. The right and just means must be adopted to achieve right and just ends, eg. to achieve Swaraj Gandhiji adopted non-violent means.

Gandhi's concept of politics is basically ethical. Ethics in politics brings Gandhi in to establishing a relationship between religion and politics. All religions have a single central problem-that is 'search for truth'. Different religions have a unity which has a universal appeal. Communal harmony is the basis which gives everybody a chance to search for truth. Gandhi never separated religion from politics. He reconstructed a new relationship between the two: ethical dimensions of politics has a close relationship between religion and politics. State and government have no links with religions, but a politician must be a religious man.

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## 10.8 CONCEPT OF POLITICIAN

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The guiding principle of a politician is to serve others in an ethical manner. Otherwise political power might be able to corrupt a politician. Separation of religion and government is a must because religion has a function in the life of an individual. Government must not be allowed to interfere in the religious domain. Gandhi's concept of government is basically secular government. Separation of minority from politics is a central target of Gandhi's attack. According to Gandhi this disassociation of politics from morality enables the rich to manipulate the politics to their advantage at the expense of the poor and weak.

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## 10.9 : CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE

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Gandhi's political discourse, civil society and state are clearly demarcated. In his political construction, civil society plays a more important role than the state. Civil society creates enough space for an individual or a group for managing their affairs. State or government must have a limited function. Here he agrees with Thoreau's view that "that government is the best which governs the least".

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## 10.10 VILLAGE PANCHAYAT OR DECENTRALIZATION OF POLITICAL POWER

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- a) According to Gandhi centralization of political power in a small group cannot help in creating participatory democracy.

Gandhi's sarvodaya centres around the small republic where the mass of people manage their affairs without depending on the state. In Gandhi's scheme, village panchayat plays a crucial role in policy making. Village panchayat consists of all the ablest youths from all castes and religions. In a face to face society, people have an informal arrangement for the management of their affairs. Village republics are a part of India's traditions. Many institutions of Indian society must be used for strengthening democracy. Indigenous institutions must have a place in a democratic system. In other words, western democracy can suit India only by adopting to the Indian conditions. As Gandhi says, "In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects." Gandhi was conscious of the historical fact that colonisation had destroyed the basic institutions of a village society. Revival of their institutions in a true spirit may strengthen

democracy. Moreover, political institutions at the grass roots level may be able to restrict the power of state.

- b) **Gandhi's concept of state** is that of a limited state which does not interfere in the day-to-day activities of people. As Indian society consists of a large number of villages, the Village Republic can be a nucleus of a democratic organisation. Otherwise, state as a coercive organisation can destroy the vitality of village society.
- c) **Once village panchayat is formed, it is easy to create a sarvodaya economy.** Political institutions can be a means for the management of local resources. Rich people can hand over their surplus land to the village panchayats which can distribute it to the needy. Labour community contributes their labour to the village fund. The individual remains at the centre of political organisation. Organisation remains small enough to be influenced by the individual. But the individual's initiative is necessary for creation of social wealth. But individual contributes his surplus wealth for the welfare of the community. Village Panchayat must look after the economy of the village which will help the prosperity of village people. '

The main agenda of Gandhian political programme is the social reconstruction issue, the village panchayat can take care of education, health, sanitation. It can help in abolition of untouchability and weaving khadi for their needs. Thus the village community can turn into a self-sufficient economy. Their needs are taken care of by their collective effort without much dependence on the urban economy. individual initiative will create a community bond. Gandhi was not opposed to the varna system. Varna system should not be based on pollution and purity. Division of labour which creates a basis for some castes to do intellectual labour and the others manual labour is not proper. Those castes who do manual work have a lower position in the Hindu society. Gandhi does not allow any separation of intellectual and manual-labour. Practice of untouchability is an institutional arrangement for creating violence in a society. Combination of hand and head creates an integral personality. Gandhi understood the real dynamics of a caste society. By removing the basis on which the ideology of caste system stands, the reconstruction of a society is possible.

- d) **Every citizen takes to the public domain, then politics become everybody's profession.** Gandhi was against the professional politicians whose encouragement corrupts public life. If every *citizen* is concerned about public activities, then the political order does not collapse. Management of individual,

community and society become easier. Centralization of political power in a small group cannot help in creating popular and participatory democracy.

Moreover, democratic institutions work efficiently only when technological needs of a society remain under human control. Technological advancement might create an alienated being which creates a psychological basis for doing violence. Technological advancement may be the basis of creating unemployment and in the end result, it creates poverty. Unemployment and poverty are the root causes of economic unit a person cannot be an active social unit. Technological advancement creates the gap between the poor and the rich, which is against the basic principles of a Sarvodaya society.

**e) Role of Industrialisation** Sarvodaya society has space for industrialisation and technological advancement, but, it should not go beyond human control, nor should it destroy the ecological basis of a society. Industrialisation and urbanisation should not disturb the village society which is the soil of India. Industrialisation leads to concentration of economic power which cuts at the roots of democracy. Concentration of economic and political power helps a small minority who can sabotage the institutional basis of a democracy. Gandhi opposes the centralisation of economic power in rural India. Distribution of land is an economic and political programme for Gandhi.

**f) Role of Education**

Education remains a major means for achieving a Sarvodaya society. A Sarvodaya social order can be created by giving *nai talim*, Gandhi was favouring compulsory primary education. Gandhi was in support of basic education a critical look of own and a deeper understanding of the problems of a society which is the responsibility of a Pedagogic system. A better society can be created only by locating the defects of a society. Social defects in the social organisation can be noted with the help of education. Practice of untouchability, division of labour on the basis of caste system has no place in a Sarvodaya society. Basic education creates love for manual labour which help a child to question the division of labour on the basis of caste system. Acquiring some skill to make somebody an effective element of a society is possible through education. Creating community awareness which becomes the basis of a Sarvodaya society is done through education. Education plays a vital role in mediating between individual consciousness and community consciousness. Unless community consciousness is created, collective energies can not be channelised in a creative manner.

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## 10.11 DECENTRALIZATION IN ECONOMICS FIELD

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- a) In Gandhi's sarvodaya society there is space for industrialization and technological advancement. but he said it should not go beyond control. It should not destroy the ecological basis of a society and should not lead to concentration of economic power, Gandhiji was for the use of machines when it was for the good of the society. Gandhiji wanted the manpower and cattle power of India to be utilized first, before turning to large-scale machinery
- b) He gave emphasis to cottage industries and hand spinning and hand-weaving. He advocated the revolutionary doctrine that 'land belongs to him who tills it'. the charkha as the means of helping people in at least getting food to the people and also symbolized the dignity of labour.
- c) Thus Gandhiji's economic thought is related to rural development. According to him village society is the soul of India. He emphasized on self-sufficiency of the village society.

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## 10.12 THEORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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This leads us to the point that Gandhi has an evolutionary concept of social change. Logic of historical development convinced him that the process of social change is very slow. Stages of history are the connected points in a chain. Slow change in a society does not lead him to pessimism. Gandhi was very optimistic that goodness of an individual would compel him to do something good for the society. Something good can be done by an individual only by knowing the wrong things of a society. Individual, social groups, community play a crucial role in restructuring a society which breeds less tension and violence. Gandhi recognises the concept of class, and the role of violence in changing a society. In his thought he was trying to minimise their role. Gandhi like Buddha understands the structural basis of violence in Indian society. Conflict and violence cannot bring a better society. Gandhi's teaching of non-violence, and Satyagrah has a Buddhist philosophical underpinning. At the same time, he allows the individual to take initiative. Social groups can get activated and 'Collective Will' can bring social change. As a result, a non-violent social order can be created only if there are no structural basis of violence. Gandhi found that in the Indian society, there are multiple bases for violence. Economic, caste, religion all can erupt into violent

politics. Gandhi by recognising material and non material basis of violence contributed to the body of human knowledge.

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### **10.13 CONCEPT OF CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME**

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Gandhi experimented with his constructive programme at the time of the non-cooperation movement in 1921. Gandhi wanted that the Congress accept his programme and only then was he inclined to launch the mass movement. Involvement in the social reconstruction programme would help an ordinary Congress worker to keep in touch with ground reality.

The Congress Party accepted Gandhi's social reconstruction Programme as their Programme. Non-cooperation movement was launched at the time when Indian Society was confronted with a lot of social turmoil. In reality, the non-cooperation movement combined multiple social and political movements within it. It was in fact the first mass movement organised on an all India level. Gandhi emerged as the leader of mass politics in India, where people of all castes and all classes participated. Participation in the mass movement became an educative experience for a Congress worker. Non-cooperation movement continued for a period of about one year which threw up many political leaders from different regions. Gandhi encouraged the Congress workers in the social-reconstruction programme when there was no mass politics. This kept the Congress workers with in the fold of social reconstruction programme. Participation in the great social experiment kept the Congress workers busy. Gandhi " was called by some local Congress leaders at Bardoli to lead another peasant movement on the issue of rent. The no rent campaign continued under the personal supervision of Gandhi, although he did not actively lead the movement. Moreover, Bardoli was a part of raiyatwari region where there was no middleman between the state and tenants. It was easier on the part of the raiyats (tenants) to lead the movement against the Government. The leadership of the movement remained in the hands of the Patidar Community, but Gandhi succeeded in motivating them to involve themselves in his social reconstruction programme. Upper caste people went to the Harijan Bastis and worked for the abolition of untouchability. In the beginning, they showed a lot of inhibitions in mixing with the Harijans, but slowly made it a part of their everyday lives.

Gandhi personally felt satisfied with the result of the Bardoli movement, although the movement perhaps succeeded only in an economic sense. It was followed by the Civil Disobedience movement which is the second mass movement on an all India plane. This

movement drew rural masses to politics. The Civil disobedience movement comprised a large number of no-tax movements. Most prominent of those were in UP and Andhra, where the leaders of the movement followed Gandhian lines by combining social and economic issues together.

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# 11

## Sarvodaya - Vinoba Bhave

### Unit Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Vinoba Bhave Life and Times
- 11.3 Vinoba Bhave's Contribution to Indian Political Thought
- 11.4 Sarvodaya - Its Significance.
- 11.5 Summary
- 11.6 Questions Pattern
- 11.7 Suggested Readings

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### 11.0 OBJECTIVES

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- 1) To understand the meaning of Sarvodaya Philosophy.
- 2) To focus on the Political Situation in India at the time of Vinoba's entry.
- 3) To understand various ideological influences that shaped Vinoba's thoughts.
- 4) To compare and contrast the communist movement and Vinoba's Bhoodan Movement.
- 5) To analyse Vinoba's thoughts and to judge its impact and relevance to modern Indian Conditions.

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### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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Sarvodaya philosophy is a novel contribution to the political thought from India. It embodies Indian Culture and tradition. The idea originally propounded by Gandhi was taken over by Acharya Vinoba Bhave. He has been called the spiritual heir of Gandhi. He developed the Sarvodaya philosophy on the principles of non-violence and trusteeship. According to Vinobha "Sarvodaya is a free ideology, embracing and comprehending the entire life. It welcomes and assimilates all that is good. The philosophical basis of Sarvodaya is consistency with and congenial to the cultural traditions and conditions of the people of India". Though an Indian ideology Sarvodaya's appeal is relevant to entire mankind.



Indian society is caste ridden, authoritarian and exploitative. In its place an utopian society should be established. Where the equality is the sole principle. It should be based on love and non-violence. The Utopian Society envisaged by sorvodaya would be casteless, classless society. In the long run it will be a stateless society.

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## 11.2 VINOBA BHAVE LIFE AND TIMES

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Vinoba Bhave was born at Gagode in Kolaba district, Maharashtra on 11 sept 1895. His Original name was Vinayak Narhari Bhave. He was brought up in a pious family of Chitapavan Brahmin. At a very early age he was inspired by the Hindu epics, especially Gita. His mother Rukmini devi had great influence on him. He recalls, "There is nothing to equal the part my mother played in shaping my mind." His devotion and spirituality is the result of self training. The second greatest influence on Vinobha was Gandhiji. In 1916 on his way to Mumbai to appear for the intermediate examination Vinoba happened to read an article written by Gandhiji and fired with a sense of nationalism he put all his college certificates into fire and dedicated himself to the course of mother land. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1916, he went to meet Gandhi. In 1921 he went to Wardha to take care of Ashram of Gandhi. He had to face imprisonment in 1932 by the British. He was accused of plotting against the colonial rulers. Even in Prison he carried the task spiritual teaching to prisoners. His talks on Gita became very popular among the prisoners. His lectures at Dhulia Jail were later published in a book form.

On 5<sup>th</sup> Oct., 1940 Gandhiji introduced to nation Vinabha Bhave as the first individual Satyagrahi.

Vinoba's life in Post-independent India is marked by many achievements. He gave a concrete shape to the ideas of Rural Development. He took up the challenge posed by the communists in Telangana from Gandhian perspective. Though he withdrew from active Politics on eve of independence and concentrated on social service like Shramdan, he was constantly consulted by national leaders. During 1965 when anti-Hindi agitation almost tore the nation, his moral authority persuaded the leaders from going to extremes. He has been criticized for being close to Nehru family and his support to Emergency was not liked by many. But his integrity and commitment to the cause of Social Justice were never in question.

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## 11.3 VINOBA'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Like all the thinkers, Vinoba was also influenced by the political and social conditions of his time. His learning shaped by Gandhian

thoughts had a long lasting effect on him. When Vinoba was entering the social life at the call of Gandhi, India was ruled by British. There was no political freedom. The colonial rulers suppressed political ambitions of the people. So the priority was getting independence. But the Indian social conditions were deplorable. Rigidity of caste structure prevented social equality. Exploitation of low castes, lack of freedom for women outdated religious practices, made Indian society unfit for political independence. So some leaders wanted social reforms first. While others wanted political independence at any cost. This presented a cross-road situation in Indian political thought. Along with Gandhiji, there were revolutionaries who wanted violence as a means to achieve ends. The Russian revolution became an attractive word for youth. There were separatist tendencies from muslim league. So it was a background of conflicting interests and contrasting ideologies, when Vinoba set out.

As mentioned earlier, Vinoba was a deeply religious man. He has studied and analyzed various religious text. But he is not a bigotist. He respected all religions. He had been welcomed by all religioussects. In one place he comments "there could never be any opposition between two religions. We can only expect opposition to two religions against irreligion. His religion is not an outward manifestation but an inward feeling. Though a deep devotee, he never stopped criticizing outdated customs. But his criticism is based on rationality, not harted of past. We must accept the good in the past and reintrepret to the changing conditions. He cites an example. A child sitting on father's shoulders can see much further than his father. Similarely we can visualize the present situation in a much more broader outlook than our fore father But as a, child cannot stand without his father's support we cannot understand the situation of out times without the cultural traditions of the past.

There are many instances in his life where he tried to change he outlook of the orthodox mentality of the priestclass and faced violent attacks. Once he carried some harijans to a temple and was assulted by the priest. In a calm sense he responded "I wanted to have a sight of God, but I got his touch." This philosophy of seeing the God everywhere is the basic tenet of his thought. Like Gandhiji, he wanted to change the hearts of the people. To win over the opponents with love. This approach of love can be found even in his attitude towards achieving economic equality and social justice. He wanted a change of heart and a sense of sacrifice from the rich sections towards the betterment of the underpriveleged. He says, "It is a curous phenomena of God that he has made the hearts of poor.rich and those of rich poor." So a transtromation of hearts of the rich is required to tide over

economic inequality. For that end the spiritual force is more effective than political action.

We find an element of liberalism in Vinoba's thoughts on religion. He appears to be a free thinker and grasped the essence of all religions. At one place he comments that the exclusionist and institutionalized religion only divides people. He values the core of religion. All religions are but partial embodiment of truth. Humaneness must be the primary religion for the whole of mankind. The only religion is religion of man and a basic foundation of that religion is faith in God. He wanted a new religious structure to be built to give human kind a spiritual guidance. He felt that this new religion should have following assumptions. New religion should not be based on the basis of rewards and punishments to be given after life in otherword it should concern with the the present life. Not what would happen in next life but explain the present predictment as a consequence of sins committed in past lite. We all know that the Hindu religion is based on the presumption of life after death. Many a time the poverty of a person is explained away as a consequence of sins committed in the past life. Vinoba wants an end to such thinking. Religion must have a direct relation to the present life on earth.

New religion should avoid all inequalities whether social or economic. Vinoba's crusade against caste hierarchy which is central to Hindu religion is certinly revolutionary. Moreover, he professed this at a time when caste feelings were very strong.

He also wanted the new religion should value the dignity of manual labour. This was again a bold attempt to change the social attitude towards people who were doing the scavenger work. In fact, he himself did that work and wanted all Ashram people to follow the example.

For Vinoba religion is not a private matter of an individual. It is a social force and encomposes the entire social fabric. Religion should be integral and not lopsided or partial in its application. Though this approach of religion having a social force may go against the spirit of secularism and libelarism which treats religion as a purely personal affair, we must understand Vinoba used the term "religion" in a much broader sense. It is not sectarian nor confined to modes of worship. It is a transformation of society.

In one place he says "Religion teaches that stealing is bad but how can stealing be sinful if accumulaton of wealth is not? If stealing is sinful, so also hoarding of wealth. Both these aspects taken together constitute religion".

To promote virtue, piety and devotion, indestructible foundation to morality, to encourage fellow-feelings among different communities and peace in the world are the chief aims of religious man.

Vinoba's approach to religion is highly radical from orthodox point of view. Yet his approach is gentle and non-violent- According to him a religious reformer should try to preserve and promote what is good in thought and practice. He must depreciate the superstitions and blind beliefs, and introduce innovations.

### **Vinoba's views on Education –**

Vinoba's ideas on education are found in a book "Thoughts on Education" The present education system is contrasted with the ancient system found in Upanishads. There is need to complete overhaul the present system which is commercialised and urban oriented. The present system does not really educate." the youth for shouldering the responsibilities of life. Nor a genuine urge for knowledge is generated. Education is only bookish, has not much relation to reality of life. Education must train the students to think for themselves. They should master a craft. "According to Vinoba education must enable student to be self reliant in two ways. He should be able to earn his living by dint of his own labour. The second, thing is the student has to be self-reliant in the matters of acquiring knowledge. The Basic Education professed by Gandhi and developed by Vinoba, represents a new philosophy of life. Society is today divided into two classes- those who work with hands and those who work with the brain. The latter think they are superior. They stay in cities, and do not do any manual work. They are devoid of social realities. While the agriculture labour lack the benefits of liberal modern education. The basic education wants to remove the division in the society. It tries to imbibe among the students the doctrine of dignity of labour. A great majority of people live in villages and the scheme of education should be village oriented. There is need for co-operation between rural and urban sections. Students from cities should use their knowledge for village betterment.

Education to be under the control of government is not desirable. There is always dangers of ruling party framing a partisan educational policy. So Vinoba wanted that the education should be completely decentralized and that it is the responsibility of people to educate themselves and their children. He gave a concrete shape to the idea of education be he envisaged should be village oriented. Each village should have its own university. It is the responsibility of the villagers to select the teachers and not any government organization. The entire village should share the expenses of providing payment for teachers. The teachers are responsible for the village and not to government. In the initial period, the Gram Panchayat may get small grant from

government to cover some incidental expenditure. The education would be informal with studying nature and understanding practical problems. The intimacy which we find among villagers could be utilized for developing ethics and spirituality among the pupils. There should be active participation of students in all aspects of village economy like agriculture, animal husbandary and other cottage industries. He emphasized the most important requirement "for the establishment of a village university is a good teacher, men who can really think for themselves and develop ideas." They should be prepared to settle in the village and be one with the masses.

Vinoba also recommended the revival of "Wandering teachers" system the spiritual gurus who would be wandering from villages to villages preaching ideas of human value. As a matter of policy Vinobaji is opposed to the practice of charging fees for education. He says, "knowledge that is purchased for cash is no knowledge. That is ignorance. True knowledge can only be had for love and service."

Vinoba never thought the concept of co-education as a controversial issue. In a family we find boys and girls together so why should that be a problem in an educational institution. His approach to women problems is also spiritual. According to him celibacy is a virtue to be followed by both men and women. He rejected the theory that it would be difficult for women to follow the rules of celibacy and argued because of this false notion women have not been given equal importance in society. With a pure heart it should be possible for men and women to carry the task of social service. The concept of Bramhacharya is a virtue to be followed by all even in household.

Vinobha also commented on many issues facing the nation. He always had certain clear cut notions on all issues. He took a bold step of meeting Dacoits in Madhya Pradesh jungles and tried to convince them the need for non-violence and social co-operation. He did not call them dacoits but called them rebels. He spoke to them "Friends, if you are rebels, I too am one. I am your friend and well wisher. I am also up in rebellion. My work consists in removing the curse of untouchability from society. to make land available to the landless, to banish poverty and undeserved affluence', with a view to wipeout the distinctions of high and low. A revolt has to be undertaken with the aid of soul force. If there were to be revolt based on soul force, there would be no dacoits and no police either. There would be love and peace everywhere and consequently a healthy and happy society would emerge."

So non-violence is essence of Vinoba's ideas. This he applied at international level. He makes an interesting contrast between the Redcross organisation and his own Bhoodan volunteers or Shanti Sena members. Though the Redcross is doing a great humanitarian work, with a deep feeling of compassion and love of humanity, its

mission is very limited in scope. The Redcross is not an organisation which is supposed to engage in the propaganda of the idea of non-violence and the need to evolve the method to settle disputes without war. The wounded soliders are taken off from war and once cured would return to kill again. So the Redcross is only an official mechanism of war. Its objective is limited. Where as a Bhoodan worker while doing the social service assigned to him like helping Harijans and adivasis is also a member of shantisena. He is a believer in non-violence and opposed to war. If this message is spread everywhere we would not need war.

### **Check your understanding**

1. Make a detailed analysis of Vinoba's social and religious thought.

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## **11.4 SARVODAYA - STS SIGNIFICANCE**

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Gandhiji was impressed by Ruskin Bond's use of the term "unto the last" and he translated it into Gujarati as Sarvodaya, it could literally mean good for all. Vinoba who took this principle from Gandhiji developed it gave an institutional structure and also implemented in selective areas. The Utopian Society which Vinoba wanted, .. in post independent India was to come through various schemes. They are Bhoodan (Land gift), Sampatti Dan (Wealth gift), Shram Dan (Labour gift), Buddhi Dan (Wisdom gift). The mechanisation and large scale industries would have a minimum role to play. They would be needed only to make village self-sufficient and economically viable. The society that is projected by the Sarvodaya is a society consisting of small peasant proprietor along with the small producer and artisuns. That society would be based on mutual cooperation. Self-interest will not be the basis of social ethics. The wealth would belong to society as a whole. It would be used for social good. The ideal of "Each according to his need." would be achieved without government coercion. Infact Vinoba as an anarchist had deep distrust of government and its administrative aparatus. He wanted all the issues and disputes be settled by social co-operation. He writes "We want an order of society which will be free not only from exploitation but also from every government authority. The power of the government will be decentralised and distributed among the vilages. Every village will be a

state to itself, The centre will have only a nominal authority over them. In this way gradually we will reach a stage, when authority in every form will become unnecessary and therefore fade away giving rise to a perfectly free society." In such a society no difference would be made between intellectual and manual labour. Basically it would be a small scale unit mode of production. Because the use of machinery would lead to centralization of production and concentration of wealth. While some form of industries may be inevitable, there will be social control and democratic management, so that these large scale industries do not result in concentration of wealth. The production of armaments would be totally banned. All decisions would be arrived at unanimously. If there are differences the decision will be postponed. An individual who differs from society on the basis of his 'inner voice' or his conscience can resort to satyagraha. This guarantees individual's liberty.

**Bhoodan** - The first step towards the establishment of Sarvodaya Society is Bhoodan. India a predominantly agricultural country had the enormous problem of landless peasants. Under zamindari system, large scale land holdings were being held by big landlords. While the farmers, worked on the land and created wealth he could not enjoy it. There was a movement called "land to the tiller" undertaken by the communists in Telengana. The deep economic disparities between landlord and peasants was creating a type of civil-war situation. Vinoba took up the issue and sought to give a Gandhian approach to the solution of the problem. The land ultimately belonged to God. Under certain circumstances, there had been unequal holdings. So something is required to level the holdings. But it will not be based on violence of landless peasants against landlords and taking over the lands with force. But it is an attempt to appeal to the good nature of landowners to spare something for landless. Because as Vinoba said, "If there are five sons in the family I want to be considered as sixth. Thus I claim one sixth of the total cultivable land." The idea is those peasants who possess more land than they need should part with the surplus for the use of landless. He is very clear about asking land. He does not ask equally nor he leaves out poor peasants. "From the average peasants I want one sixth to big peasants and zamindars my request is to keep a little for themselves and donate rest to me - - - I would go on demanding till all the landless in the country are provided with land". Vinoba gives an excellent explanation as to why even a small peasant should donate his land. In India the most unhappy persons are landless peasants. Compared to them small holding people are happy.

We should always look below that makes us to be happy if we look above, we feel unhappy. The idea of "Thy need is greater than mine", fills us with a sense of sacrifice. The second reason is to make people develop a sense of detachment. "As we must give water to the thirsty so also we must give land to the tiller who demands. I want to bring home to the people all that land as it belongs to God. Today both rich and poor suffer from ownership Complex. I want everybody should get rid of attachment" Thirdly when poor people start donating their land, it would have a moral impact on rich. They should feel their own moral responsibility to the society. The origin of the Bhoodan movement started in Telangana. At pochampalli, in the Nalgonda district, where Vinoba toured, he put a question to Dalits. What served their interest most. That was the time where communists have established a reign of terror. The answer Vinoba got was, if Dalits get a land, their problems would be solved. Then Vinoba asked the people gathered if anybody is willing to donate surplus land and immediately a person came forward. This made Vinoba to pursue the idea of Bhoodan.

This idea of voluntary donation of land by rich has been criticized by communists. They argue that most of the land donated by the rich peasant is uncultivable. A prominent communist leader questioned the ideology behind the Bhoodan movement. "Vinoba is not prepared to assert God's right (on land) through legislation. He does not call toiling masses to assert their right on land. He is bringing God's right to give compensation to land lords."

Vinoba's deep commitment to spirituality is not appreciated by the communists. Yet he says he is not against communism. He finds faults with the communist approach to the social problems. The tendency of the communists to treat all rich people as bad will only strengthen the unity of affluent classes against the poor. As contrast to this his approach would be to isolate the 'good' rich people from the bad. About the argument that the land donated by rich is uncultivable he counters argument that some Rajas have infact donated good land. Even if some gave uncultivable land they would themselves get exposed before the public and in a way it is victory for the poor. He is firmly committed to the idea that it is possible to change the hearts of people.

He says "The ideology of communists must be faced by a positive ideology and sound action. If the rich people take up the "Bhoodan



yagna" movement and donate one sixth of their property communists will vanish."

Gramdan : This is an advanced stage of Bhoodan. The entire village would work together. It aims at elimination of poverty. A genuine feeling of love and co-operation among various sections of society to be created. Man's faith in true religion is to be strengthened. The new social order would be one of non-possession. A voluntary manual labour would attend to various needs of the village. To remove political bitterness a common platform for all political parties to be formed. It aims at world peace.

One aspect of this Gramdan is self-sufficient villages. Vinoba's ideal is individual production not that of co-operative venture advocated by the communists. His economics is simple. Agriculture, spinning wheel and village crafts. The villagers should use what is produced in that village. So the exploitation of outside market forces is eliminated But how far it is practical is another question.

Again the communists criticize this assumption. Basically it is cutting down consumer's choices. Again until and unless the factors of production are completely owned by community and the production is carried on collectively there would be exploitation in the village.

Sampatti Dan - The idea of sampatti Dan envisages a moral responsibility of the wealthy sections towards society. It is not like taxation by government or appropriation of wealth as suggested by the communists. The householder would be asked to part one sixth of his wealth. The amount would be with the owner. He would be asked to spend it on specific things suggested by Vinoba or his nominee and send receipts. Though the primary idea is to finance the Sarvodaya activities, Sampatti Dan has certain broader aims. The rich would win the love and trust of the poor. The wealth would be regarded as a common fund of entire society. It would foster an ideal that gold or money is of less value than the manual labour. To make people to discharge their social responsibility, and become less and less dependent on government agencies. This would generate Lokshakti (people's power) that could guide social affairs independent of states supervision.

It is very clear that this is highly idealistic. There would always be vested interests in society who would be unwilling to share their wealth with others. It is impossible to perceive a situation where wealth and property would be voluntarily given up by the rich.

But Vinoba's optimism on human change is very deep. In one of his speeches he exhorted the people to banish money from transactions. "Money is at the root of this country's degradation. People should work to live rather than ask others for money. Money should be eliminated from the daily routine." But how can an age old barter economy be revived in a complex monetary situation?

**Vinoba's views on Democracy party system and other issues**

- There is a remarkable change in the politics of India between Pre-independent and post independent period. The Pre-independent period was marked with political agitations, movement and a period of unrest. With gaining independence new challenges faced the nation. What should be the attitude of people to a "native government". How far the newly established political institution serve the nation? what are the challenges faced by a country which is economically poor. Yet embraced a democratic setup? These are some of the questions which bothered Vinoba. He had witnessed many elections. Studied different political parties, manifestos, observed working of some government institutions. With all the experiences he wrote a book Lokaneeti. The book highlights the defects in the formal democratic structure and offers some suggestions. Vinoba believes, like many liberals that the democratic form of government is better than the dictatorship. But the western model as it is being followed in India has many shortcomings. The idea of welfare state is a wrongly conceived notion. If the government acts in a way covering various aspects of citizen's life- education, health, economic betterment- there would be little incentive for the people. Their freedom would remain a tactical approval of Govt's policies, every five years during elections. Sometimes it could be disapproval. Yet the fact remains, citizens are far removed from administration in a planned economy of welfare state. According to Vinoba the concept of "Swaraj" implies that everyone must have a feeling that he is his own master and can manage his affairs. This feeling should permeate the people at every level of administration or government. "Government by the people is only a nominal thing. In actual practice government is controlled by the elected representatives who in turn are controlled by the ruling party which has majority. Voters in a constituency have really no right of primary choice of a candidate. Normally the Party bosses who are usually strongly entrenched in Position will select a Candidate. Once elected, the representatives have hardly any connection with the people who voted them. At best

the representatives act as middlemen. As we should get rid off middle men either in business or other activities we should involve a system where these representatives would not be involved in dealing with people's problems. What actually Vinoba had in mind? A case of direct-Democracy! A policy perceived by Rousseau in "General Will" theory! Where the community would unanimously arrived at a decision based on common good. The idea of panchayat system is one such thing. The villagers would have a Panchayat where what is good for whole village would be worked out. That is why there was a convention that elections here should be on non party basis. But the convention failed. Today all local bodies elections are fought on party basis.

That is the reason why perhaps Vinoba had a distrust on the party system. According to him the party system is a foreign originated and not suitable to Indian social system. Parties divide people while social problems should unite them. He wanted the dissolution of various political parties and wanted the "formation of united front of all good and honest people in the country carrying out community-agreed programmes" While political parties always instigate the people. They are always for power. But can modern democracy based on parliamentary system survive a partyless politics? It is highly debatable proposition, though has some good points.

Another aspect of modern democracy which Vinoba criticizes is the use of money power in elections. It distorts the picture of public opinion. Votes are being purchased. An eminent and honest worker hardly gets a chance of being elected against a rich opponent. Moreover the election system being fought on caste basis has perpetuated the caste structure. While Sarvodaya believes in evolving a society of castelessness, the elections have always divided people on caste, religion, region and so on.

Vinoba's views on many of the political institutions appear to be highly idealistic. But still his writings are a warning that establishing a political democracy without proper social and moral force is of little use. After all, the end of any government is good of the people. If we ask the question whether the present model of parliamentary Democracy based on elections and party system is able to cater the needs of poor people, the answer is far from satisfactory. So a constant effort is needed to review the system and evolve new methods. Sarvodaya is one such honest attempt.

### 11.4.1 Check your understanding

1) Critically evaluate the philosophy of Sarvodaya?

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### 11.5 SUMMARY

Vinoba Bhave was a original thinker. He critically estimated the shortcomings of the Indian social system. He was of the opinion that social transformation of Individuals is more important than the political empowerment. His emphasis is on the discharging of one's duties rather than agitation for rights. He sincerely believed that real India lived in villages and wanted villages to be economically self-sufficient, socially tension free and morally an ideal place. To achieve this he suggested various constructive programmes. Some of them he implemented also.

He is a strong believer in the spirituality of man. For him non-violence is the ultimate strength. That is why though he shared the ultimate aim of marxists that we need to create a society based on economic equality and free of exploitation, he could not agree to their methods of annihilating wealthy classes. He wanted the wealthy classes to realise their moral duty towards others. He wanted a total transformation. The experiments in Bhoodan encouraged him to follow peaceful methods to change the society.

But most of the plans suggested by him are not applicable. Can India progress without industrialization? How can we not keep an army in face of foreign aggression? We need weapons to defend. Once again some of his statements during emergency imposed by Mrs. Gandhi led to lot of criticisms. He differed with Jayaprakash Narain on his concept of "Total Revolution" and called the emergency' - the darkest period in Indian Democracy - as desirable. He called said it as "Anusashan Parva" - The period of discipline. But the emergency could not be defended by any standards. Did he realise his mistake. Some say yes. Because when Mrs. Gandhi was defeated in post emergency elections and a new government came at centre he expressed his delight.

Apart from these controversies Vinoba was a legend. He is a true heir to Gandhiji. His death on November 15, 1982 has left a void in the social thought of India.

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### 11.6 QUESTION PATTERN

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- 1) Critically estimate Vinoba's views on Indian Democratic System? What are the merits and limitations of the alternative system suggested?
- 2) Write an essay on the significance of Bhoodan Movement.

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### 11.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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1. Reddy Narayan Karan V.  
Sarvodaya Ideology and Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh Sarvodaya Mandal, 1963.
- 2) Bakshi Ram  
Struggle for Independence : Vinoba Bhave, New Delhi, Amol Publication, 1980.
- 3) Singh Harmohinder and others (Eds)  
Vinoba Bhave and his mission to serve all, New Delhi, Sarv Panb & Sons, 2008.



# 12

## Jayaprakash Narayan

### Unit Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Life and Times
- 12.3 Social and political thought of Jayaprakash
- 12.4 From Socialism to Sarvodaya
- 12.5 Total Revolution
- 12.6 Summary
- 12.7 Questions
- 12.8 Suggested Readings

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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- 1) To understand the significance of Jayaprakash Narayan's thoughts
  - 2) To study the influence of counter influences of Gandhism Sarvodaya and Marxian Socialism on J.P.'s thoughts.
  - 3) To look into political conditions that shaped J.P.'s thought on 'Total Revolution'
  - 4) To understand the political and ideological similarities and differences between J.P. and Vinoba
  - 5) To analyze J.P.'s ideological impact on Indian Political system.
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### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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Jayaprakash was a courageous leader. He resisted the unjust authority wherever it came. Coming from an ordinary family he rose to the level of Loknayak, by dint of his integrity, ideological purity and a passion for social justice. It is really surprising the way he could mobilise masses and lead a peaceful revolt against a corrupt government which was holding ... office by sheer majority. Perhaps in post independent India no movement was as great as J.P.'s movement. It changed the political climate. And for the first time a change of government came at centre. The Janata government installation at centre is a unique achievement of Jayaprakash.

J.P.'s life is also centred round many controversies. His views on Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland were not liked by "nationalists". He had political differences with Vinoba his companion in Sarvodaya. Infact he was asked to resign from the Sarvodaya Sangh before he could continue his agitation against ruling Congress Government in Bihar. The Bihar agitation took a violent form. L.N. Mishra was murdered. There were opinions that movement had slipped out of J.P.'s hand. He was advised to call off agitation. When he refused he was sharply criticized. Still ultimately J.P. won. But his victory was short lived, as the Janata experiment at centre collapsed paving way for return of Mrs. Gandhi, who imposed emergency.

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## 12.2 LIFE AND TIMES

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Jaya Prakash Narayan was born in a middle class family on Oct 11, 1902. His father wanted him to join the government service. After his primary school in the village he was sent to Patna for higher education. In Patna his contact came with 'nationalists', who were very active in Saraswati Bhavan. This association was to shape his thoughts. He was a brilliant student and could have pursued his academic life as a life objective but his association with Gandhiji changed his life out look. The period between 1914 and 1922 was a formative period. He was attracted towards Gandhiji. His simplicity and plea for non-violence attracted Jaya Prakash. In champaran district of Bihar, Gandhi Satyagraha was a great success. That inspired J.P. to follow Gandhi's ideals. When Gandhi and Nehru visited Patna, in 1921 and gave a call for students to boycott schools and colleges and join the non-co-operation movement, J.P. like many students did so. He was scheduled to appear for his F.A. examination but he gave up the studies. However when Gandhiji called off the movement due to violence that erupted in the movement, Jayaprakash resumed his studies. Tilak also influenced J.P. to a large extent.

His interest in higher studies led him to USA where he stayed till 1929. He studied in different universities also worked to support his studies. While in USA he met intellectuals from Eastern Europe and the Marxist ideology appealed to him. He wrote "The Marxist science of revolution seemed to offer a surer and quicker road to revolution than Gandhiji's and technique of civil disobedience and non-cooperation" He felt the knowledge of social science was a prerequisite to understand the real problems of India which have a socio-political background.

His return to India in 1929 coincided with many political developments in India's struggle for independence. Gandhi leadership

was still central. In spite of his Marxist admiration J.P. had still a regard for Gandhi. Nehru was rising in politics then. At Lahore congress session JayaPrakash was attracted towards Nehru and subsequently he joined the congress as secretary of Labour Department. The functioning of congress party disappointed him and he wanted to inject some revolutionary zeal into the party. Gandhi's approach of Charkha, Khaddar, were not attractive to younger members in Congress. Most of them were impressed by the Russian Revolution and wanted Indian freedom struggle to adopt a more radical posture. In 1934 Jayaprakash took the lead and formed the congress socialist party. This would act as a pressure group on the parent party to take more revolutionary path. At Ramgarh congress session in 1940, J.P. moved a resolution which was highly radical in terms of economic power being controlled by the state. It pledged for collective ownership and control of all large scale and heavy production. The resolution emphasized complete control of state in the fields of transport, shipping, mining and heavy industries.

He was imprisoned and kept in Hazaribagh jail by Britishers from 1940 to 1946. He created a history in 1942 when he escaped from jail and organised a secret underground movement to carry the freedom struggle. He was again arrested in 1943 and kept in Lahore Fort. Dr. Rammanohar Lohia was also in the same jail. After his release from prison in 1946, a proposal was made by Gandhiji to make J.P. as the congress president. This proposal was not accepted by the working committee. From 1948 to 1951, J.P. and Lohia tried to build up an alternative to congress party. The Praja Socialist Party was formed. But the election results of P.S.P. were quite disappointing J.P. was disillusioned. There was some talks of Nehru, J.P. co-operation, but it never materialised. In 1954 he resigned from socialist party and withdrew from active politics. He became active in Sarvodaya movement. It was in 1973 he became active in politics and led a movement for total revolution.

**Check your progress :**

1. Briefly discuss the life and time of Jaya Prakash Narayan.

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### 12.3 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF JAYAPRAKASH

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As mentioned earlier J.P.'s thought was influenced by several ideologies. The chief among them is Marxism. As an intellectual he had clear perspective about how the post independent India should develop. He was a sincere believer in socialist economic model. It was quite understandable. Most of the revolutionaries were also committed to the betterment of poor. While earlier social reformers and liberals concentrated on social matters the later thinkers concentrated on economic issues. Getting political freedom from colonial rulers is of little significance until and unless that political independence is used to transform the lives of exploited classes. The concept of social justice will be meaningless without economic equality. The new policy should attack poverty and stress on distribution of wealth. Socialism as a philosophy is an attack on poverty. In 1931 Karachi session of congress. Jayaprakash clearly spelt out an ideological frame work for economic transformation. The resolution said, "The state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport."

When he was in Nasik jail he met many eminent personalities like Ashok Mehta, N.G. Gore, S.M. Joshi and Masani. It was in Nasik jail that the plan for formation of congress socialist party was framed. In Bombay on oct 21-22, 1934 the first annual session of the congress socialist party was held. J.P. was moving spirit behind the resolution that emphasized the socialistic nature of the policy. The resolution listed certain objectives to be achieved by C.S.P. These resolutions clearly spell out J.P.'s ideological commitment to socialism. The aims of C.S.P. were (i) transfer all power to the producing masses. (ii) Economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the state. (iii) Socialisation of key and principal industries (iv) state monopoly of foreign trade (v) Redistribution of land to peasants (vi) co-operative and collective farming to be encouraged (v) Right to work to be a fundamental right (viii) Non-discrimination between sexes by state - gender justice. (ix) Repudiation of public debt.

A perusal of these resolutions show how revolutionary J.P. was in his economic thought. Some of these resolutions are a replica of the communist ideology. Yet by 1930. J.P. was moving away from communist ideology and chalking out an independent plan for himself.

**Communism to Democratic socialism** : J.P. had serious differences with the Indian Communists. He was actually a member of the American communist party and worked for it. When he came back to India he was associated with them for some time. But the ideological affinity soon gave away. He felt that the communist party of India is being directed and dictated by soviet Union. "During the salt Satyagraha and demand for complete independence movement", J.P. recalls communists were no where to be seen. He soon learnt that the

communists were denouncing Gandhi as a "lackey of Indian bourgeoisie" They denounced the independent movement. The Communists in India were only following the policy laid down by the Third communist international, which by then had completely come under the leadership of Stalin. This policy had resulted in the division of labour and socialist movements throughout the world and in the isolation of the communists from the national movements in all the colonial countries. This policy of Stalin, according to J.P. was contrary to Marxist theory generally and specifically to the colonial policy enunciated by Lenin. He recalls "my differences with the CPI marked the beginning of my ideological alienation from soviet Russia itself."

While the freedom struggle in India was at high pitch, Europe saw the emergence of Hitler and Nazism. For some time Stalin felt a half mad person like Hitler would soon fall and socialists and communists could raise. But that proved to be wrong. Hitler consolidated and crushed the communists. He expanded the German borders by attacking small countries. Indian communists then suggested a policy of united front. They till now were denouncing the Indian national congress and Gandhi, now wanted to join the front. J.P. now recalls that he allowed many CPI members to join C.S.P. It was a mistake. Because the communists acted as saboteurs. They till Hitler attacked Russia denounced war as imperial war and once Russia was attacked treated it as peoples war. That was the time when quit India movement was launched. The argument of Indian national congress leaders was, while war against Hitler and fascist forces were justified, India being a country ruled by colonial power could not share the war burden being launched by colonial masters. If India become free, then as an independent nation it can contribute its might against Nazism and Fascism. The war was for freedom. But we ourselves were slaves. So how could we join the war. If India was granted freedom then war against Hitler would be morally justified. Britain was in no mood to heed that advice and the congress party launched quit India movement. The communists proved more loyal than king in their support to war efforts. Nationalist leaders were arrested and kept in jail by Britishers. Communists betrayed the cause of motherland by siding with Britishers/ This left a deep distrust of the communists and their motives on J.P. and other C.S.P. leaders. Again communists supported the partition of India and Creation of Pakistan. For a long time they refused to recognize India as an independent country. Their attitude of dancing to the tune of Moscow, taking orders from Russia, made Jaya Prakash to abandon communist way of thinking.

The developments in soviet Union and China, made Jayaprakash to question certain fundamental ideas of Marxism. The idea of "dictatorship of proletariat has turned into "dictatorship" of bureaucratic oligarchy" in communists countries. Soviet union invasion of Hungary in 1956 and chinese intrusion and suppression of Tibetians, only made J.P. to view the communist policies more critically. Both Russia and

China were acting like any imperial power suppressing small independent countries, narrow national interests with utter disregard to international public opinion.

Jay Prakash had studied various accounts about the trials that happened in Socialist Russia. The policies of Stalin were exposed by later communist leaders. There were trials, annihilation and suppression of dissent. He recalls "all these events and experiences compelled me to re-examine the basic postulate of Marxism." The main issue came about violence as a method of revolution. He writes "If the theory of violence as a mid-wife of revolution was not challenged in its entirety at least this much became clear to me (a) that in a society where it was possible for the people by democratic means to bring about social change it would be counter-revolutionary to resort to violence and (b) that socialism could not exist, nor be created in the absence of democratic freedom. As a logical corollary I rejected the dictatorship of the proletariat." Reflecting on the Russian revolution and its distraction from the road to socialism, J.P. recalls, "the Russian revolution had started as a people's revolution that had active support of the broad masses of Czarist Russia, but Lenin converted it into a minority revolution when he forcibly dissolved the constituent assembly in which he was in a small minority and seized power with the help of rebel soldiers and the urban working class. The subsequent miscarriage of revolution, .... was the direct result of the forcible seizure of power by a minority." According to J.P. a social revolution must be allowed full freedom to find its own democratic expression. By instinct, people everywhere are in favour of democracy and freedom it is never natural for people to subject themselves to dictatorship. But the communists everywhere have established dictatorship and they call it "Peoples' Democracy" and Socialist Democracy" This is hypocrisy and double talk.

Soviet experiment of socialism had only destroyed capitalism but has not achieved social justice. There is also denial of formal freedom and equality. The emergence of a new class of bureaucratic rulers are as much exploitative in nature as the erstwhile capitalists. The reason for this state of affairs was over-centralisation of political and economic authority and total statism. The evils of regimentation, compulsion, suppression of freedom, that followed communist rule everywhere could not be attributed to socialism. It would be a grievous fallacy that the ideal of socialism be repudiated. As J.P. writes, "It is not socialism that can be fairly charged with misdeeds of Stalin and his puppets - it is a political system that evolved from the drive to develop at breakneck speed a backward country threatened by foreign aggression and internal resistance."

The Russian experiment in particular and the European socialist path in general, made Jayaprakash Narayan to do some hard thinking on the methods Indian and Asian countries to follow. One strong lesson he learnt from Russia was, the pace of industrialization resulted in

dictatorship and alienation of individual. India and other Asian countries want to catch up with west in the process of industrialisation. It would be an illusion to think that the pace of industrialisation would not matter if the process were carried out under democratic regimes. Because beyond a certain limit, the pace itself would give rise necessarily to conditions of dictatorship. In order to achieve the "target" of 'creating wealth', before thinking of distributing it, even a democratic government may resort to acts like disciplining labour, incentives to wealthy classes curbing the rights of worker and so on. So it is the 'desire' to increase wealth that is the source of dictatorship. J.P. was critical of both communist and non-communist socialist parties in Europe. He writes "If European Communism failed European socialism has seen no conspicuous success either." He makes a comparative study of various socialistic countries in western Europe - who have claimed to be following Democratic Socialism but draws a dark picture. In Germany failure of social democratic party to rule effectively, paved the way for Hitler. In France, "The socialist government led by Guy Mollet, Openly sided with British governments attack on Egypt. Though the British under Gaitskell's leadership tried to act in a just manner during the Egyptian crisis, the record of British socialist is far from satisfactory. The idea of 'welfare state' being practiced in Britain and else where is a poor substitute for socialism. The only country where J.P. found socialism and its ideas working satisfactory was the Scandinavian countries - Sweden for example. But this could be for the reason that the country is small in size and the Swedish community being homogenous has social co-operation well based. But the most important factor is "greater emphasis on the non-state forms of socialism such as people's voluntary co-operation" The socialism which has been built in China and Russia is a far cry from the brotherhood of the equal and free - that is essence of true socialism.

In view of all this, the Asian socialists are left with no choice but to find their own path. Though the Indian socialists could study the European experiment in Socialism they cannot blindly implement it here. Not only there are short-comings in that system - as mentioned above - but also the conditions in Asia are different. According to Marx, socialism was a stage of society that came after maturing of capitalism. In Asia, industrial capital development is in its infancy. So the European experiment is no guidance nor the Chinese system which is based on ruthless policies.

In 1950 China followed a genocidal policy against Tibet which exposed its imperial designs and it could hardly be said to be policy of the socialist country.

So all these things made Jayaprakash to focus on new thinking. He felt time has come for original thinking which can show some guidelines for the future pattern of Indian society. In this context two important issues need to be considered. The Gandhian technique of social revolution was being tried by Vinoba under various schemes like

Bhoodan, Gramdan, Sampatti Dan which was aiming for 'social reconstruction in a non-violent way and on the foundation of morality and social co-operation. Secondly, there were large scale industries owned by state, and state ownership and bureaucratic management of economic enterprise in the country. This has been misconceived as socialism. For a long time J.P. was critical of Gandhi's ideas of Charka and village development. But gradually he came round a Gandhian ideals. What impressed him most was Gandhi's insistence on morality.

It has been generally argued that the Marxism is amoral and many people denounce it for that. But J.P. found that, this feature, of being moral is not confined to marxism alone. Politicians of all breed, from time immemorial have practiced amoralism. Only a great person like Gandhi wanted politics based on morality. The experiments in Russia confirmed Gandhi's fears that if means are wicked the ends could never be good. J.P. recalls, "the evil ends that had resulted from evil means in Russia, particularly the foul means that were used to perpetrate the staggering crimes during purges, revolted me from the 'revolutionary ethics' of marxism and forced me to question if good ends could ever be achieved by bad means" In general he wanted a system based on democracy, decentralization, and a realisation that means must be morally consistent with ends. With his view he set up the Praja Socialist Party which was based on Democratic Socialism.

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#### **12.4 FROM SOCIALISM TO SARVODAYA**

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The poor electoral results of P.S.P. has made J.P. to think afresh of the need to search a new path. Already he was disillusioned with socialism. Gradually he started losing interest in politics. In 1954 he resigned from the national executive of the socialist party. He was attracted to Sarvodaya philosophy. He offered himself as a Jivan-Dani to Sarvodaya.

Freed from political party compulsion he became more active socially. He founded India-Pakistan conciliatory group in 1962. He worked successfully to bring the cease-fire in Nagaland in 1964. The prestigious Ramon Magasay Award was bestowed upon him in 1965. This was awarded as a symbol of recognition for his services to the people.

His views on state, party system, Democracy, elections and revolution changed rapidly. He gave an alternative political and social system which was based on Gandhian thoughts and Sarvodaya. Equality, freedom, brotherhood and peace remained his ideals. It became clear to him that politics could not deliver these ideals. He pondered whether there was any alternative to politics? can we change the society and reconstruct it in any other method other than through the agency of state? He found an alternative in Gandhian thought.

Gandhiji had given some grand hints about his non-violent techniques for changing and reconstructing society. Although he had no time to demonstrate it- his death removed him from post independent Indian scene - his writings showed us how he wanted the independent India to proceed in its way towards "progress". His suggestion that the congress should withdraw from the field of politics and turn itself into "Loksevak Sangh" was not appreciated either by Jayaprakash or others at that time. But as he reflected more he realised that, "Gandhiji was not a party leader fighting and manoeuvring for power for his party. He was a world leader of humanity working to free his fellow men from bondage. The Indian freedom movement was a peoples movement par excellence. It was not Rajniti (Politics of the state) but Lokniti (Politics of People) It is this realisation that made J.P. to break a new ground.

The party system as was working in post independent India disturbed him more and more. All political parties were hankering after power. They are all corrupt. Backed by finance, organisation and propaganda, have the power to impose themselves on the people. The concept of Democracy - which means people's rule became party rule. This party rule is actually rule by a small group or coterie. Democracy became only a game of getting votes. Even the right to vote which is the corner stone of democracy would be of little significance, when we realise that the right is severely restricted by the system of powerful parties setting up their own candidates and the voter had to make his judgement within the limited choice offered by the parties. Once again the issues that are posed before the electorate are highly emotional and incomprehensive.

It is the responsibility of political parties to act as honest brokers between government and people. They should function in a way so as to develop the strength and initiative of the people. People should be able to manage their affairs with a spirit of self-government. But "all that parties were concerned with was to capture power for themselves so as to rule over the people, no doubt with their consent! The party system, so it appeared to me, was seeking to reduce the people to the position of sheep whose only function was to choose periodically shepherds who would look after their welfare! This to me did not spell freedom - the freedom, the Swaraj for which the people of this country had fought" writes Jaya Prakash Narayan.

The Democratic Socialism recognised this Problem and tried to come out with some remedies. The independent trade Unions, consumer association cooperative associations of various kinds were supposed to act as "checks and balances" of absolute state power. But J.P. was not convinced of their effect Trade unions themselves became more and more bureaucratic. The concept of decentralised

remained in paper only. He was convinced that the Democratic Socialistic State will be "Leviathan that will sit on the freedom of people."

He finds that Sarvodaya has an answer. What is required is to develop an internal and external discipline among individuals, which make it possible for the people to do without the state as far as practicable and to run their affairs themselves directly. What is required "to establish peoples' socialism instead of state socialism". J.P. writes, "Whether one agrees or not with Sarvodaya philosophy', one should agree that more of people's or voluntary socialism and less of state-enforced socialism the fuller and more real the socialism." To develop non-state socialism, it is not necessary for any one to function as a party or to engage in a struggle for capture of power. What is required is dedicated workers prepared to go and live with people and help them to reorganise their lives on a self-reliant and self-governing basis. Gandhiji had planned Loksevak Sangh for such a purpose.

J.P. argues that, we are living in a complex industrial society. Economic and social relations have become impersonal and non-lifegiving. The sole criteria of life is productivity and efficiency. Science has tuned the whole world into a neighbourhood, but man has created a civilization that has turned even neighbours as strangers. In such a complex society we would only see bureaucrats, managers and state organisations, exercising complete power and domination. An individual would be a mere cog in the wheel. While Sarvodaya is individual centred. If men lived in small communities, the ideal for which sarvodaya strives self-government self-management, mutual co-operation, and sharing, brotherhood, freedom could be achieved. There is another aspect of individual development, mere material wealth will not make a perfect person. There is need for spiritual enhancement of a man. Sarvodaya stresses this aspect. The idea was stated earlier by Aldous Huxley in his book science, Liberty and peace. He says "the man's psychological and spiritual needs cannot be fulfilled unless (a) he has a fair measure of personal independence and personal responsibility within and toward a self-governing group, (b) his work possesses a certain aesthetic value and human significance and finally (c) he is related to his natural environment in some organic and symbolic way" –Gandhiji's idea of gram raj echoed this philosophy. Villages are the foundations of his proposed society. A society of equal and free human beings living as brothers in peace.

Jaya Prakash Narayan says science has two aspects. The pure science and applied science. The applied science which is technology was used by money makers to initiate a particular type of production -

large scale machinery. The emphasis was on profit with scant regard for nature. If the scientists had their way they would have used the pure science to make productive units which are eco-friendly and would only reduce the hard manual work, without making man a slave of machine.

The argument advanced by Jaya Prakash in Sarvodaya per-se is not against science or technology. Infact 'Charka' is a machine. what sarvodaya wants is the revival of small communities and producing mostly for self or local consumption on small machines. But we should not assume that mere small size of a community would automatically lead to the establishment of Sarvodaya type of communities. What is emphasized is that life in small communities which promotes personal relationship and social co-operation will be more conducive for realization of the Sarvodaya ideals. The outward forms of living have relevance only when inward forms are given.

If the nation is completely reconstituted with small small village communities each self sufficient and completely free to manage its affairs, what would happen to the ideas of nationalism? J.P. has answered this. He writes, "in a Sarvodaya world society the present nation states have no palce. The Sarvodaya view is a world view. There is no reason to suppose why self-governing small communities will be hostile to one another or isolationist or selfish in their inter-relationship."

Jayaprakash whole heatedly suported Vinoba programmes of Bhoodan, Sampatti dan and other social revolutionary ideas. He found Bhoodan as a revolutionary idea to solve land problem without using the power of state. He has writte "unless socialism is transformed, into Sarvodaya thase goals (liberty, equality and fraternity ) would remain beyond reach and just as we had to teste the ashes of independance, so the future generation might have to test ashes of socialism"

### **Check your Progress**

1. Make an analysis of Jaya Prakash's transformation from socialism to sarvodaya?

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## 12.5 TOTAL REVOLUTION

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Around 1973, there was political unrest in India. It started in Gujarat. Students, non political organization, wanted to dismiss the elected government on the charges of corruption. J.P. took the lead. It soon spread to Bihar. It was at that time J.P. gave his idea of total revolution. People power should replace government power. non-Partisan approach to social problems is needed. The strength of democracy lies in the role of voluntary associations. His ideas were treated as dangerous by the ruling congress government. His peoples movement against corruption was dubbed as fascist and an emergency was declared. But J.P. was able to organise a new party called Janata Party and defeat Mrs. Gandhi at election. He expected the Janata govt to implement his ideas of total revolution, which should make "India free, Progressive and Gandhian ideas." He emphasised the need for value in politics. Sevice before self. Accountability of leaders to the people. Peoples' participation in policy formations. A participatory democracy in place of representative democracy. But all these things remained a pipe dream Janata Party collaped with internal bickeings. Party politics overruled the Gandhian ideas. J.P. died as a sad person.

### Check the progress :

- 1, Define the terms total Resolution as he concept relevent to modern indian social life.

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## 12.6 SUMMARY

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Jaya Prakash Narayan's political though can be studied under three phases of history. the initial period marked his ideas of Marxism, rvolutionary politics and moving away from Gandhi, ideas of non-violence and Swaraj. He took a lead in making the congress to take the path of socialism. The Congress socialist party prepared a manifesto which gave a blue print to the post independent Indian economic development. At this stage he was convinced of large scale

industrialization, centralization of power and planned economic development.

The second phase marked his moving away not only from socialism but even from party politics. He was attracted towards Sarvodaya and found it more dynamic than socialism.

The final phase marked his re-entry into active politics and leading a movement against repressive state. Though his ideas on total revolution failed to translate themselves into reality, he expressed the power of people through non-violent agitation.

### 12.7 QUESTION PATTERN

- 1) Briefly examine Jayaprakash Narayan's political Thought?
- 2) What is meant of Sarvodaya? Examine J.P.'s views on Sarvodaya.
- 3) Discuss different stages of evolution of political thoughts in J.P.'s ideas.

### 12.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- 1) Ghose, Sankar  
Modern Indian political thought, New Delhi, Allied Publisher, 1984,
- 2) Prasad Bimal  
J.P. and social chang, New Delhi, Radiant publisher, 1990.
- 3) Datta Amlan  
Beyond socialism, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1993
- 4) Selbourne David (Ed)  
In Theory and Practice : Essays on the politics of J.P.  
Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1985.



# 13

## Communalism: Hindu, Muslim and Sikh

### Unit Structure:

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Hindu Communalism
- 13.3 Muslim Communalism
- 13.4 Sikh Communalism
- 13.5 Summary
- 13.6 Questions
- 13.7 Suggested Reading

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### 13.0 OBJECTIVES:

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1. To understand the term 'communalism' etymologically and comprehend its widely acceptable definition in the context of India.
2. To take account of the social, historical and political reasons that gave rise to Hindu communalism. Moreover, study political repercussions of Hindu communalism prior to the partition of the country and in the contemporary political scenario.
3. To comprehend the reasons for the rise of Muslim communalism and assess its damaging socio-political and consequences on modern Indian history.
4. To make an attempt to understand the causes for the rise of Sikh communalism prior to and after the partition of India.

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION:

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In order to make an attempt to analyse communalism we must be careful to distinguish it with the positive denotation associated with it in the English language. For instance the New Webster's Dictionary defines communalism as a sense of "belonging to the community." Therefore, outside the subcontinent, the social scientists define communalism in altogether different terms. For instance, Murray Bookchin explains that communalism is "a theory or system of government (sic) in which virtually autonomous (sic) local communities

are loosely in federation.” Nevertheless, in the subcontinent the term communalism is used in the sense corresponding to the word sectarianism outside South Asia. In the South Asian socio-political lexicon communalism has a negative denotation, which essentially signifies the misuse of religion for acquiring social, economic or political power. Thus, when a politician invokes religion to make political gains, he degenerates its sanctity and turns it into communalism. Accordingly, religion, in the true sense of the term, does not correlate to communalism. It is the notorious use of religion for the attainment of power in varied forms that worsens it as communalism.

Communalism in the subcontinent is a political strategy to further the so-called incompatible concerns between different religious communities with an objective to fuel communal clashes. Political parties, to capture political power, usually adopt this strategy. Communalism is, to quote Bipin Chandra, is a false consciousness of one’s identity. To believe that a person is identified only by the religion he professes is to disregard his ethnic, cultural, professional and economic indices of identity. In fact, these other identities are far more instrumental in orienting the course of a person’s life.

Communalism espouses totally wrong premises to promote the politics of hate and vengeance. Communalists argue that since the religious identity is the most important to define various social groups so each religious community has its own history. It must be pointed out here that though the splitting up of historical eras on communal lines like the Hindu period and the Muslim period was a deliberate stratagem devised by the British historians, many Indian historians, instead of correcting the wrong, loyally endorsed the communalisation of the history of the subcontinent. For instance, a prominent historian such as R. C. Majumdar is also guilty of carrying forward the prejudices and canards against the rulers who happened to identify themselves as Muslims. According to Irfan Habib, “To him (Majumdar) the entire period c. 1200 onwards was one of foreign rule; Muslims were alien to Indian (Hindu) culture; the Hindus oppressed and humiliated, wished nothing better than to slaughter the ‘*Mlechas*’ (Muslims); the British regime was a successor more civilised than ‘Muslim rule’; yet real opposition to the British came from the Hindus, not Muslims, even in 1857; and finally the national movement’s course was throughout distorted by concessions made to Muslims by Gandhiji...”

If Majumdar, a much-revered historian, reads history with such shockingly communal mindset then, one can imagine what the average teachers must be teaching in the classrooms. Communal interpretations of history completely undermine the economic, social and political factors that have been far more potent than the faith of the

rulers in giving direction to the course of history. They also disregard the fact that in the history of the subcontinent there were hardly any communal tensions all through the so-called Muslim period. The communal divide originated during the British rule, in particular, after the failed uprising of 1857, and got intensified in the twentieth century owing to the colonial masters' policy of 'divide and rule'. In this sense, communalism is a recent phenomenon.

Communalism proposes that since each community has its own historical perspective it must also have its own political affiliation. The contention is that a political party of its own can only protect the interests of a community. This has been the justification for the establishment of the Muslim League in 1906, a development that can only be described as the institutionalisation of communalism in Indian politics. The 'two-nation' theory so resolutely advocated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah after 1935 was a logical corollary of communalisation of politics pursued by the Muslim League and robustly sponsored by the British. How erroneous was Jinnah and his separatist theory got revealed in less than 25 years after the creation of Pakistan when Bangladesh, home to more Muslims than Pakistan, emerged as an independent state in 1971.

Communalists maintain that religion determines cultural ethos and since according to them Hindus and Muslims constitute two separate communities their cultures including linguistic and literary heritage are also different. Any objective analysis can expose this prevarication put forward by the communalists. There are more than 50 Muslim countries and each one of them has its specific homegrown culture. It is equally wrong to believe that Muslims in India constitute a monolith social group. The Muslims are as much divided in terms of culture as the Hindus. Urdu, which is unfortunately got labeled as the language of the Muslims after Independence, is an alien tongue to an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of South India and, in the present context thanks to the anti-Urdu policy of the government, is no longer a preferred language of most of the Muslims of North India. In Pakistan where Urdu enjoys the status of an official language, it is the mother tongue of less than five percent of the population. In this backdrop one must understand the Sangh parivar's persistence with the concept of cultural nationalism for the saffron brigade makes attempts to impose a single culture and a sole language across India. The slogan of 'Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan' is the obvious expression of such a mindset.

In order to conceptualise communalism we must take into account the ideas that are usually associated with the notion. Firstly, communalism is a political ideology which is usually embedded in religion. Though religion per se is not the source of communalism, the

political elite using religion to capture political, economic and social power turn religion into a political weapon and then it assumes the form of an ideology. Secondly, though communalism has linkages with religion, it hardly promotes religious agenda; it actually manifests itself more in the projection of political, social and economic demands. Thirdly, communalism serves as a political weapon in the hands of the elite of the respective religious communities on account of which they mobilise the support of the susceptible masses. Fourthly, communalism emanates and thrives on the hatred of the 'other'. In this it presupposes the existence of another religious community against which sustained propaganda could be carried on. It is the constant expression of prejudices about the 'other' nourishes communalism. Fifthly, communalism is a terrible iniquity that plagues plural societies and consequently their all-round growth and advancement. Sixthly, it presents an exclusive view of a society wherein only a particular religious community controls all the modes of power, be it social, political or economic. For this reason communalism is opposed to national integration and secularism. Lastly, it exhorts masses to resort to violent means against the 'other' that leads to outbreak of communal violence.

The most hideous manifestation of communalism is communal violence. The worst communal riots in the subcontinent were of course the ones erupted in the aftermath of the partition in which, as per reliable estimates, close to a million people were killed and many more were rendered homeless and traumatised. Nevertheless, communal riots in independent India are recurring phenomena. The most striking aspect of them is that they can hardly be linked to religion. They occur because of political or economic pressures that are the hallmarks of a competitive culture. The unscrupulous politicians sow the seeds of communal hatred in order to win elections. For that reason, many observers believe that communal riots are episodic. Whenever deceitful political parties or members of such parties strive to consolidate their communal constituencies they embark on dividing society on communal lines. The consequent communal riots help them win elections.

Secondly, communal riots generally break out in those places where the minority community has a sizable presence and thus, can be in competition with the politicians and businessmen belonging to the majority community. A communal riot is unlikely to break out, say for example, in Satara or Sangli towns of Maharashtra where Muslim presence is negligible. Conversely, places like Mumbai and Aurangabad are considered to be 'communally sensitive' by the authorities because of the presence of substantial Muslim population,

which can compete with the majority community for having a share in political and economic power.

Thirdly, many studies suggest that several communal riots had their roots in economic rivalry. The immediate cause of the riots might be something different but the real cause is usually to damage the economic prowess of the targeted community. For instance Moradabad riots, the Mumbai riots of 1992-93, and the Gujarat pogroms of 2002, started out for diverse reasons but they were thoroughly planned to ruin the businesses of the Muslims.

Finally, all political parties, perhaps with the exception of the Left parties, get engaged in espousing communalism whenever it suits them. It is, therefore, a bit inaccurate to label a party secular only because its constitution says so or its leaders shout from the rooftops that they are committed to secularism. It is widely known that parties such as the BJP, Shiv Sena, Muslim League, Akali Dal, Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and some others are openly communal. Nonetheless, the principal political party, the Congress, has always been an umbrella organisation for both overtly secular and covertly communal politicians. Since Nehru personally was a genuinely secular person, the Congress rank and file could not dare to dabble in communal politics. However, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was a self-professed pragmatic politician and she did not have any qualm in exploiting communal sentiments for political gains. She would emotionally manipulate Hindu voters in Jammu and, at the same time, portray herself as the defender of Muslims in the valley. She would not hesitate in proclaiming that the Muslim League in Kerala was a secular party. With an eye on Hindu votes, she even went to the extent of making a common cause with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad on the controversy that surfaced when some *dalits* embraced Islam in the Meenakshipuram district of Tamil Nadu. Mrs. Gandhi was also guilty of dividing Hindus and Sikhs on communal lines in Punjab to settle scores with the Akali Dal.

Her son, Rajiv Gandhi too played the communal card. In the wake of Shah Bano controversy, he passed the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill to please the misogynist and regressive Muslim leadership. Thereafter, to win over the communally inclined Hindus, he lent his active support to open the locks of Babri Masjid and allowed *pujas* to be performed there. Prime Minister Narsimha Rao under whose reign the 500-year-old Babri mosque was demolished by the BJP and its allies pursued the similar communal policies. Therefore, it is wrong to presume that the Congress is a secular political party because its constitution says so or because its leaders claim to be adherents of secularism. It is a political party and like any other party its ultimate objective is to capture political power. If the

votes can be garnered in an area by espousing communal ideas it does not hesitate to do it and at the same time if an election can be won in some other area by shouting from the rooftops about secularism it willingly does it.

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### **13.2. HINDU COMMUNALISM:**

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It is quite well known that the British strategy of 'divide and rule' was largely responsible for the rise of communalism of every hue. Nevertheless, Indians themselves, to some extent, were responsible to accentuate the feelings of distrust and enmity against each other on religious lines. The establishment of the British rule broadly resulted in two major responses from Indians. The one, that was of assimilation, compromise and social reform, got its best and the earliest expression in the thoughts and deeds of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule. They were the earliest liberals who wanted to reform Indian society by borrowing the most positive and progressive values of the West and blending them with the best and humane values of India. Thus, they strived for a synthesis of the Eastern and Western civilisations that should serve as a guiding force for social reform. In the field of politics they stood for the evolution of an all-inclusive representative government. The second reaction to the British rule was that of revivalism, the earliest organised form of which was Dayananda Saraswati's Arya Samaj movement. The revivalists wanted to revive the socio-political, religious and cultural values of ancient India that, in their opinion, were the pinnacle of cultural and intellectual glory that got sullied and mutilated because of the successive periods of foreign rule. In other words the revivalists blamed the rulers of the mediaeval period who happened to be Muslims. The logical corollary of this line of argument was that Islam and its adherents were primarily responsible for the degeneration of Hinduism and the regression of the Hindus. We can easily detect a communal approach in such an analysis of Indian history.

Consequently, the genesis of Hindu communalism can be located in Dayanad Saraswati's movement. It must be clarified that Arya Samaj was a commendable movement so far as the religious reforms were concerned. In a sense it was a very progressive religious reform movement that attacked idol-worship and favoured the worship of a single unseen God, condemned caste system and untouchability, spoke of gender equality, supported the cause of education and so on. Nevertheless, some of the ideas and programmes of Arya Samaj did result in sharpening the enmity between Hindus and Muslims. Dayanand Saraswati established Arya Samaj in 1875 at Bombay and two years later opened its branch at Lahore. The movement soon



adopted militant means in carrying out its pet programme viz. the *Shuddhi* movement or conversion of people of foreign faiths, mostly Muslims, into Hinduism. As Jawaharlal Nehru observed: "The Arya Samaj was a reaction to Islam and Christianity, particularly the former."

Dayanand's concept of nationality was based on the acceptance of Hinduism and the Vedas as the final word in all matters related to nation and nationality. He openly declared that the Muslims and the Christians were the enemies of the Aryan culture and, therefore, they would not have any place in Indian nation. In his famous work, *Satyarth Prakash*, he not only denounced Islam and Christianity but also Jainism and Buddhism by calling them as false faiths. Moreover, he also condemned the teachings of saints like Kabir, Nanak and Chaitanya who had made colossal contributions to the enrichment of the socio-cultural heritage of India during the mediaeval period. Arya Samaj presented a very narrow view of Indian nation as it restricted the existence of national consciousness only among Hindus. It was certainly an anti-Islamic and anti-Christianity movement and as Nehru pointed out, "it was meant to revive Hinduism... It was, indeed, Hindu nationalism raising its head. And the very fact that it was Hindu nationalism that made difficult for it to become Indian nationalism." It was the erudition of Nehru that made clear the distinction between Indian nationalism and Hindu nationalism. It is the proclivity of most Hindu communalists to define nationalism in cultural terms which are invariably Hindu in essence.

Thereafter, Hindu communalism turned into a political force albeit wearing the cloak of nationalism but distinctly discriminating against Muslims and Christians. Though we cannot label Bal Gangadhar Tilak an ideologue of Hindu communalism as he stood for Hindu-Muslim unity in the last phase of his life, some of his earliest political actions such as starting of Ganesh festival and invoking religious scriptures such as Bhagwad Gita for political actions were clear examples of mixing religion with politics, an attitude that was categorically anti-secular. Besides, Tilak was very fond of the intelligence and activities of a young student whom he helped acquire a scholarship to study in England and that young man ultimately turned into one of the most influential ideologues of Hindu communalism. His name was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Savarkar went to England after completing graduation in 1906 with the blessing of Tilak. The pursuit of higher education was only a pretext as Savarkar was expected to make contacts with militant Indians in London and prepare ground for a revolution against the British Raj. He was caught by the British, tried to escape, recaptured and sentenced to fifty years imprisonment in the dreadful prison of Andaman. Then he was shifted to Ratnagiri jail in 1923 from where he

was released on condition that he would not participate in any political activity. He, however, got associated with Hindu Mahasabha and spewed venom against the adherents of foreign faiths, particularly the Muslims. He coined and defined the concept of Hindutva, which according to him was a different and much broader term than Hinduism. He delineated the concept as "...those who love the land that stretches from Sindhu to Sindhu, from Indus to sea, as their fatherland and consequently claim to inherit the blood of the race that has evolved, by incorporation and adaptation, from ancient Sapta Sindhus, can be said to possess two of the most requisites of Hindutva." According to Savarkar, the religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians who did not seek any pride in the ancient cultural heritage of India or in whose veins the blood of Indian ancestors did not flow were not part of the Hindutva. Savarkar declared in no uncertain terms that India was a Hindu Rashtra because it was essentially the land of the Hindus.

In 1915, Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha was established to promote the ideology of Hindutva and with an ultimate purpose to make India a Hindu Rashtra. The Mahasabha did appreciate Congress' fight against the British but it strongly opposed its principles like non-violence, civil disobedience and secularism. It was particularly critical of the policy of the Congress to treat Muslims as equal members of Indian nation. Though Savarkar was the most well-known member of the Mahasabha, other prominent leaders such as Madan Mohan Malaviya (founder of the Benaras Hindu University), Dr. K. B. Hedgewar (founder of the RSS) and Shyama Prasad Mookherjee (founder of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh) were also its members at various times. It was because of the growing political clout of the Muslim League and the emergent tendency of separatism among Muslims, many radical Hindus were attracted towards the ideology of the Hindu Mahasabha. When Pakistan became a reality the Mahasabha blamed the Congress, in particular, Mahatma Gandhi for following a policy of Muslim appeasement and dividing the country. When Nathuram Godse, a member of the Mahasabha, assassinated Gandhi on January 30, 1948, Savarkar too was arrested as a conspirator. Though he was later acquitted, the image of the Mahasabha got a beating and many members left it to join other organisations.

Hindu communalism got the biggest boost when the Rashtriya Swayansevak Sangh was established in 1925 to champion the cause of Hindu nationalism. It is essentially a Hindu right-wing, paramilitary, Hindu male volunteers' organisation. It must, however, be pointed out that the members of the RSS and its supporters never lose any opportunity to deny the charge of militancy or communalism. They resolutely that the RSS is a cultural and educational organisation and

its volunteers also take part in nation building activities. The RSS was established by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur with the purported objectives of opposing the British rule and challenging Muslim separatism. According to Encyclopedia Britannica: "Hedgewar was heavily influenced by the writings of the Hindu nationalist ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and adopted much of his rhetoric concerning the need for the creation of a Hindu nation." The leaders of the RSS have adopted various complicated and deceptive means to retaliate the accusations of militancy and anti-minorities, particularly anti-Muslim agenda. For instance until 1949, it did not have a proper constitution of its own that could give an inkling about its ideology. Moreover, it does not maintain a record of its members that helps distancing from someone or claiming affiliation with someone depending on the expediency of the situation. This exactly happened in 1948, when Nathuram Godse, an ex-member of the organisation was arrested for assassinating Mahatma Gandhi, the RSS denied its link with Godse. However, that time many leaders of the RSS were arrested and the organisation was banned on February 4, 1948. Later all the RSS leaders were acquitted and the ban was lifted in July 1949, only when the second Sarsanghchalak, M. S. Golwalkar submitted a copy of the constitution of the RSS to the government.

There are many Hindu organisations that seek inspiration from the ideology of RSS and are treated to be the members of the Sangh Parivar. Together all these organisations function under the inspirational umbrella of the RSS and can be jointly defined as the Hindu Right. The prominent among these organisations are: the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal, Vanbandhu Parishad, Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh, Vidya Bharati, Seva Bharati and many others that are active throughout the country. The RSS does not directly participate in elections. It, however, maintains close contact with the Bhartiya Janata Party, the number two political party of the country in the current political scenario. The BJP is the current version of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh that was established by Shyama Prasad Mookherjee in 1951. Mookherjee was a member of Nehru's cabinet but he was not happy with the policy of secularism that was so dear to Nehru and many leaders of the Congress. His objective in founding the Jana Sangh was to provide a political platform to those who desired to make India a Hindu Rashtra. The BJP, though does not officially espouse the ideal of a Hindu Rashtra today, it continues to pursue, more or less, the similar programme that was envisaged by Mookherjee. The Shiv Sena, a regional party in Maharashtra, also subscribes to

militant Hinduism. Though currently it has a political alliance with the BJP, it cannot be technically included in the Sangh Parivar.

As many as six judges heading six different commissions of inquiry related to communal riots have so far indicted the RSS for its involvement in communal violence. They include, Jaganmohan Reddy report on the Ahmedabad riots of 1969, D. P. Madon report on the Bhiwandi riots of 1970, Vithayathil report on Tellicherry riots of 1971, Jitendra Narayan report on the Jamshedpur riots of 1979, P. Venugopal report on the Kanyakumari riots of 1982 and report on the Bhagalpur riots of 1989. Moreover, the international agency, the Human Rights Watch has accused the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal and Bhartiya Janata Party for direct involvement in systematic killings of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002. Additionally, many police reports and eyewitnesses too have named local leaders of the VHP, BJP and BD for perpetrating violence against Muslims. Quite a few NGOs and the Congress party have also accused the RSS and its allied outfits such as VHP, BD and Hindu Jagaran Sammukhya for their involvement in anti-Christian riots in Orissa in August 2008. The RSS and its affiliates of course deny these accusations as baseless and usually attack the Congress and the Left parties for hatching a conspiracy against the Sangh Parivar to appease Muslims and other minorities for garnering their votes. The Sangh Parivar also denied its involvement in the demolition of the Babari mosque in 1992, while the Liberhan Commission that inquired into the unfortunate incident has clearly stated in its report that the Sangh Parivar was majorly responsible for the demolition of the mosque.

### **13.2.1 Check Your Progress:**

1. Discuss the development of Hindu Communalism in India.

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2. Critically examine the basic arguments of Hindu communalism.

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### 13.3. MUSLIM COMMUNALISM:

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A cursory glance at the Muslim history suggests that the loss of political power and the ensuing sense of insecurity had frequently forced the scholars (*ulema*) to go back into their shells and put forward a rigid, revivalist interpretation of Islam. The stagnation set in Islam firmly when the Tartar warrior Hulagu Khan sacked Baghdad in 1258. Thereafter, the Muslim scholars would invariably never come to the front to meet the challenges of the ever changing world. They began sermonising that the Muslims should strictly emulate the traditions laid down during the times of the Prophet irrespective of their incongruity in the changed circumstances. Consequently, a liberal tradition of *ijtihad* (an objective interpretation of the Islamic tenets in the light of the changing socio-political conditions), was almost abandoned.

In India, the *ulema* faced a momentous adversity when Gerard Lake, commander-in-chief of the East India Company (1801-1805) asked them to explain the position of the Muslims under the Company's rule and clarify the stance Muslims were supposed to take in the light of Quran and *shariat* (Islamic law) toward their Christian rulers. After much reflection and nitpicking, Shah Abdul Aziz (son of one of the most revered saint-scholars of Delhi, Shah Waliullah) declared that since almost the entire country was under the control of the Christians or the puppet native rulers appointed by the Company, India could no longer be called *Dar-ul-Islam* (abode of peace), it got transformed into *Dar-ul-Harb* (war zone). This ruling, according to the Islamic law, left the Muslims with just two options. They should either wage a holy war (*jihad*) against the 'infidel' rulers or should migrate to some country under the control of the Muslim rulers. The second option was obviously preposterous because the overwhelming population of the Muslims, except the faith, was as much Indian as Hindu, Buddhist or Jain. Therefore, the *ulema* recommended the second option. In order to prepare for jihad, Syed Ahmed Barelvi (1786-1831) was nominated as *Amir-ul-Momineen* (chief of the Muslims) and all the Muslims were warned that anyone defying the dictates of the chief would be treated as a *kafir* (infidel) and would be punished accordingly.

Syed Ahmed went on to launch a militant revivalist movement that he named after Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahab who had started on a similar movement earlier in Saudi Arabia. The Wahabi Movement of Syed Ahmed Barelvi was an audacious attempt to organise the Muslims of the subcontinent to recapture the lost political power from the British by force. Besides a militant political agenda, the Wahabis preached an exclusivist brand of Islam that hardly offered any space to

the non-Muslims. If we have to trace the genesis of Muslim communalism in India then we can discern it in the Wahabi Movement. It was the first Muslim fanatic movement in the subcontinent. In order to accomplish his ultimate objective of reviving Muslim dominance in India Syed Ahmed looked for a safe territory that could serve as the base for his military adventures. Prior to declaring jihad against the British, Syed Ahmed, therefore, launched the military operations against the Sikh kingdom of Punjab in 1826. The Wahabis could occupy Peshawar in 1830 but the very next year Syed Ahmed was killed fighting against the Sikhs.

The command of the Wahabi movement then went into the hands of Wilayat Ali and Inayat Ali, the two brothers from Patna who were trustworthy disciples of Syed Ahmed. They somehow managed to keep the movement going working from remote places like Sitana, Malda and Chittagong in Bengal. By 1847, the Wahabis were well prepared to launch a militant campaign against the East India Company. Ten years later the Wahabis played a significant role against the British in the uprising of 1857. Bakht Khan, the commander of the sepoys who first entered Delhi, was a very active member of the Wahabi movement. The failure of the uprising not only decimated the Wahabi movement but also brought unbearable misery and unprecedented oppression and torture on the Muslims, particularly in North and Central India. The British thought that the Muslims were primarily responsible for the uprising and, therefore, the British administration unleashed a barrage of repression, cruelty and persecution against the Muslims. Their estates were confiscated and thousands of Muslim land-owners as well as poorer people were either hanged or massacred. At this point of time Syed Ahmed Khan (popularly Sir Syed) made a courageous attempt through his book, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, to make British understand that it was not the Muslims but the wrong policies of the Company that were responsible for the uprising of 1857.

Sir Syed is very much a misjudged person particularly in the eyes of the Hindus. The primary reason for anti-Sir Syed perception is his advice to the Muslims to keep themselves away from the INC. The critics argue that such attitude towards the INC infused separatist tendency in the minds of the Muslims that ultimately resulted in the partition of the country. The Congress leaders never forgave and forgot Sir Syed for it. Taking a cue from the Congress, the Hindu Right (that is always on the lookout to grab any opportunity to denigrate a Muslim cause or a Muslim leader) also joined the anti-Sir Syed chorus. It was expected from the clear-headed leaders of the Congress that they

should have analysed Sir Syed's stance contextually with a dispassionate approach.

Sir Syed did advise Muslims to shun the INC. However, his counsel was not the offshoot of any communal streak or separatism. At a time when he was struggling really hard to persuade Muslims to seek modern, scientific education so that they could also get benefits of opportunities made available by the British rule, he did not want that the Muslims get entangled in politics and lose motivation for educational development. He believed that with proper education the Muslims would automatically qualify for the membership of the councils. In a lecture delivered on December 28, at Lucknow, he had made it plain that so far as the issue of membership of the councils was concerned, the Muslims could hardly match the competence level of the Hindus. In the beginning of the lecture he stated: "It is not my routine to lecture on political issues. I do not recall any occasion when I have spoken on political issues. I have kept myself focussed on spreading education among my Muslim brethren for I believe it will be beneficial to Indian nation and Indian government."

The second reason that forced Sir Syed to keep the Muslims aloof from the Congress was that he was sceptical about the success of democratic form of government in India. He was of the opinion that since Indians were divided on the bases of religion, caste, language and culture, a united national struggle that the INC was claiming to lead would not be successful and that a democratic form of government would not be established in India. Furthermore, he could not foresee that India would get rid of the British rule in the near future. He obviously erred on this count but he did not label the INC as a Hindu outfit. Also he did not encourage Muslim separatism, as many critics accuse him of. Sir Syed's political ideas are devoid of communalism, Islamic revivalism or pan-Islamism. He was neither an enemy of the Congress nor hostile towards Hindus. In the words of R. C. Mujamdar, "Sir Syed was not so much anti-Hindu as he was pro-Muslim... It was not that he loved Hindus less but he loved the Muslims more." Though Sir Syed erred in foreseeing the prospect of democracy in India but he erred sincerely. Most importantly, why should opposing the INC, that too, of the nineteenth century when it was nothing more than a debating club for the educated members of the privileged class of Indians be construed as a communal or anti-secular act?

The growing influence of the Extremist leaders in the Congress who were slowly but certainly advocating a more aggressive strategy against the government had alarmed the British. They again invoked

the policy of 'divide and rule' that had helped them on earlier occasion. In 1900, the British administration acceded to the Hindus' demand of making Hindi, written in Devanagri script, the official language of the United Provinces (presently Uttar Pradesh) in place of Urdu. The Muslim elite feared that their culture and religion would be ultimately swallowed by the Hindus. Five years later, to placate the Muslim sentiments, the British partitioned Bengal, a decision that extremely upset the Hindus. It must be made clear that Muslim leadership in those days consisted of rich landlords, nawabs of Indian states and a few affluent religious scholars. There was hardly Muslim leader belonging to the middle or lower middle classes. There was an organisation, All India Muhammadan Educational Conference dominated by the elite. Their delegation met with the British Viceroy at Simla in October 1906 with a proposal to establish a separate political organisation for Muslims. In December 1906, the Muslim League was established at Dhaka with Sir Agha Khan III as its President.

The establishment of the League as a separate political outfit with the purported objectives of protecting and promoting the socio-political interests of the Muslim was a huge setback to the concept of Indian nationalism and thereafter, the Hindu and Muslim communal organisations, consistently ridiculed the Congress stance that all Indians belong to a nation. In 1909, Muslim communalism was legally enshrined because the Reforms Act of 1909 accommodated the principle of communal electorates. The Muslim League was not a broad-based political organisation to put pressure on the government. Nevertheless, the British rulers themselves were eager to make it a political force to counter the nationalist demands of the Congress. The British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald issued 'Communal Award' on August 4, 1932, declaring that henceforth the agreement between the two religious communities would be a pre-condition for any further political advance. This gave almost a veto power to the Muslim League because no Congress demand was to be acceded to by the government unless the League gave its consent.

Muhammad Ali Jinnah had started his political career as a Congressman and being a member of the Congress Jinnah was as much a nationalist and secularist as any other prominent Congressman. It was unfortunate that Gandhi's association with the nationalist movement and his penchant for using Hindu idioms and similes in the nationalist discourse infuriated Jinnah so much that he decided to leave not only the Congress but India itself and set up house in England. It was only after the release of the Communal Award that the egoistic streak of Jinnah's personality forced him to



come back to India as the all powerful leader of the Muslim League to settle personal score with Gandhi. After 1932, though Jinnah remained as irreligious as he had always been, he turned Islam into a political ideology to defeat Indian nationalism and promote his notorious 'Two Nation' theory. It was one of those paradoxes of history that a truly nationalist and secular leader had to leave the nationalist movement, mainly because of ego clashes with Gandhi, and ended up as the *Qaid-e-Azam* of the Muslims in which capacity he would always have to share the major responsibility for dividing the subcontinent and creating Pakistan.

In independent India the Muslim League does not have a powerful presence. It is confined only to a couple of districts of the state of Kerala. There is also another Muslim communal political party viz. the Majlis-e-Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen which has some following in the old city of Hyderabad. However, there are a few Muslim communal organisations which are active throughout India and are engaged in spreading the venom of communalism among a major section of the Muslim middle class. One of the oldest and perhaps the most influential communal organisations is the Jamat-e-Islami which was established in 1941, by an obscurantist, Syed Abul Ala Maudoodi. After partition of the country, Maudoodi went to Pakistan and his followers in India rechristened the organisation as Jamat-e-Islami (Hind).

Maudoodi did not make any distinction between the religious sphere and that of the state. He was deeply influenced by the ideas of Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen of Egypt whose founder Sheikh Hassan Albanna believed that the word *deen* (religion), in the modern political context, was synonymous with the state. Maudoodi not only opposed separation of religion and state but also derided the concepts of nationalism, socialism and democracy. He was of the firm opinion that a secular-nationalist-democratic state was the negation of Islam. He said that acceptance of a secular-democratic state "is a deviation from the Quran. Any attempt to establish it is treason to the Prophet. And pleading for it is a rebellion against the rule of God."

Plainly, the ultimate ideological aim of the Jamat is to establish a pristine Islamic order (*Nizam-e-Mustafa*) not only in a particular country but throughout the world. Moreover, the Jamat publishes a large body of ideological literature mostly in Urdu and some of it negates the very foundations of democracy, nationalism and secularism. For instance there is a booklet published by the Jamat dealing with nationalism, democracy and secularism wherein the three ideas have been spitefully condemned and rejected.

Jamat-e-Islami Hind refrained from participating in elections. Instead it would support various political parties at various times as per political expediency. However, in April 1911, it has launched its own political party, the Welfare Party, that is likely to take part in elections for Uttar Pradesh Assembly due in the beginning of 1912. On April 25, 1977, the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) was originally established at Aligarh as the student wing of the Jamat. Subsequently, when SIMI adopted militant methods to accomplish its objectives, the Jamat severed its relation with it around 1981. SIMI's objectives could be gauged from its slogan which goes like this: "Allah is our Lord, the Quran is our constitution, Muhammad is our leader, jihad is our way and *shahada* (martyrdom) is our desire." One can easily detect in this slogan a streak of thought that rejects Indian constitution, democracy, secularism and non-violence. Though, SIMI is a banned outfit currently, intelligence reports suggest that it might be active in the garb of Indian Mujahidin.

It is obvious that in a country like India Muslim communalism or for that matter communalism of any minority is nothing but suicidal. It provides justification for majority communalism which has the potential to become fascism. Nevertheless, one reason that helps Muslim communalism thrive is the frequent outbreak of communal violence since 1947. It goes without saying that it is the Muslims who suffer the most in these riots. The anti-Muslim attitude of the police and other security agencies during and after communal clashes instills a feeling of despondency and despair in Muslim youths that makes them prone to believe in the ideology of hate propounded by Muslim communal leaders. The problem of Muslim communalism has been further complicated by the terrorist activities of certain groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad which are based in Pakistan but are allegedly involved in various terrorist attacks in India. Though there is hardly any clinching evidence of involvement of Indian Muslims in such heinous acts, the security agencies and common Indians do suspect the complicity of some local Muslims. The earlier Muslims get rid of the ghetto mentality and join the mainstream of secularism and democracy as the rightful and responsible citizens of India the better for their own benefit.

**13.3.1 Check Your Progress:**

1. Discuss the reasons for the rise of Muslim communalism in India.

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2. Make critical assessment of Muslim communalism.

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**13.4. SIKH COMMUNALISM:**

Sikhism is perhaps the latest among the major religions of the world. It emerged in the Punjab during sixteenth century when the Mughals were the dominant political force in India. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Devji was a great mystic of his time who, in view of the presence of religious enmity between the Hindus and Muslims, attempted a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam in his new faith of Sikhism. Historically, Sikh communalism, if at all we can use the term in the context of the beginning of the seventeenth century, first appeared as a means of survival against the oppression of the Mughal emperors. The fifth guru of Sikhism, Guru Arjan Dev, was subjected to torture and ultimate death in 1606, by the Mughal emperor Jehangir for reasons that were far from religious. Guru Arjan Dev's son, Guru Har Gobind took over the reins of Sikhism and it was he who transformed Sikhism into a creed of the warriors. Subsequently, Emperor Aurangzeb executed Guru Tegh Bahadur also for political reasons. The last Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh constituted the Khalsa, a religious-temporal body of the Sikhs to defend the faith as well as promote its secular interests. Thereafter, the Sikh forces inflicted heavy blows to the Mughal power. The Sikhs could establish a rule of their own which came to an end with the victory of the East India Company in the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849.

The partition of India in 1947 that divided the province of Punjab into two had damaged the economic interests of the Sikhs as many

rich Sikh peasants owned large tracts of land in the fertile region of West Punjab that was awarded to Pakistan. Moreover, in East Punjab too the Sikhs did not constitute a majority, which led to their demand for a Punjabi Suba. They achieved it when the Hindi speaking areas of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh were separated from Punjab and made separate states. Despite accomplishing the objective of the Punjabi Suba where they constituted the majority, the Sikh elite were far from satisfied. Sikhism, like Islam does not separate the state sphere from that of religious. The Akali Dal, is not only a political party but also an important religious organisation for the Sikhs.

The Akali Dal, therefore, subscribes to a political ideology that does not correspond with the principles of a secular-democratic polity like India. As a result, the Akali Dal espouses certain political objectives that help sustain Sikh communalism. Akalis refuse to accept the value of secularism on the ground that their faith does not distinguish between religion and politics. The Akali Dal also maintains that it is the sole representative organisation of the Sikhs that takes care of the religious, social, political and economic interests of the community. The moderate leaders of the Akali Dal who had the intent to tone down the extremist ideological views in a heterogeneous society like India, did never have much clout in the organisation. It had always been dominated by the hardliners such as Master Tara Singh, a dominant figure both in Akali Dal as well as the Sikh Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC), who declared in the All India Sikh Conference in 1953: "Englishman has gone (sic), but our liberty has not come. For us the so-called liberty is simply a change of masters, black for white. Under the garb of democracy and secularism our Panth, our liberty and our religion are being crushed." Reacting to growing communal feelings among the Sikh Pandit Nehru observed in 1954: "If these ideas spread, India will no doubt suffer, but the Sikhs will obviously suffer most of all."

At the time of the partition of the country, the Sikh elite were really in a dilemma. They were totally confused whether to side with secular India which their religion did not permit or to go along with the theocratic Pakistan which did not have any place of honour for non-Muslims or aspire for Khalistan which seemed to be a distant dream. They were asking themselves that while the Hindus got their Bharat and the Muslims their Pakistan, what the Sikhs got. The feeling of deprivation of political power has always been an undercurrent of Sikh politics. Though, the community does not have any apparent reason to complain against the policies of the government because unlike the Muslims, the Sikhs have never been discriminated against in services

or business opportunities. The constitution treats the Sikhs as part of Hinduism, as a result of which the lower caste people among the Sikhs are entitled for similar reservations in legislatures, services and educational institutions as are available to the depressed sections of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain communities. The Sikh percentage in armed forces far exceeds their percentage in the population of India. Then, what were the reasons that gave rise to Sikh communalism in India?

The answer could be traced in the group psyche of a robust religious community that craves for an identity of its own and a piece of land that truly belongs to it and no other. The constitutional definition of the Sikhs as a sect of the Hindus because of which the lower caste Sikhs enjoy many concessions has become a contentious issue. The militant sections of the Akalis demand a change in the constitutional definition of Sikhism because, according to them, it is a separate religion and not just a sect of Hinduism. The logical corollary of establishing a separate religious identity will be, as some Akali leaders believe, a demand for a separate homeland for the Sikhs i.e. Khalistan.

During the 1980s communal and sectarian violence erupted in Punjab. The Congress under Mrs. Indira Gandhi resorted to similar tactics of divide and rule that the British used in undivided India. In order to settle score with one faction of the Akali leadership, Mrs. Gandhi sided with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In the process she created a Frankenstein's monster as Bhindranwale stockpiled a huge cache of arms in the Golden Temple, the most sacred place of the Sikhs, and then challenged the authority of the state with an objective to create Khalistan. The Operation Blue Star followed that eliminated the threat of Bhindranwale and his supporters but also damaged the Golden Temple. The military action within the precincts of the Temple was considered to be a blasphemous act and most Sikhs turned avowed enemies of Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress. Consequently, two Sikh security guards of Mrs. Gandhi assassinated her in 1984 and in the subsequent anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and its suburbs more than five thousand Sikhs were brutally murdered by the marauding hordes of Hindus who were purportedly the supporters of the Congress.

Currently, the militancy in Punjab is under control and it seems that the Akali hardliners who aspire to create Khalistan are in a minority in the Akali Dal. However, Sikh communalism has become a political force in the politics of Punjab and may become a serious threat to national security if it is allowed to go unchecked for too long. There are many separatist Sikh groups that have sought asylums in countries like Canada, England and Pakistan. They openly work for the

establishment of Khalistan. Pakistan's complicity in the issue is also a matter of serious concern. To put it briefly Sikh communalism is not exactly directed against the majority community of India; it is directed against India itself.

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### **13.5 SUMMARY:**

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Communalism in India, be it Hindu or Muslim, is to a large extent a construct of the colonial masters. It is the off-shoot of the British policy of divide and rule. Among Hindus the communal feelings got planted with the inception of the Arya Samaj. Thereafter, a few freedom fighters such as Tilak and Aurobindo made use of Hindu religious idioms, symbols and festivals to attract the masses. It was political use of Hinduism that ultimately strengthened Hindu communalism. The establishment of Hindu Mahasabha and RSS prior to partition vitiated the Indian social climate on communal lines. Their brand of communalism is majorly anti-Islam and anti-Christianity. In independent India first it was Bhartiya Jana Sangh and currently it is BJP and RSS which mainly represent Hindu communal forces. There are also minor Hindu religious outfits that are active at regional levels.

Muslim communalism is also a colonial construct. When the British ultimately became the political masters of the subcontinent, the Indian Muslim elite initially responded with utmost hostility towards anything that was remotely British. The involvement of the Muslims in the uprising of 1857 and its failure completely shattered the political position of the Muslims in India. Initially, the British followed a policy of vengeance against the Muslims but by the turn of the twentieth century, started promoting Muslim communalism to check the popularity of INC. Therefore, the Muslim League came into existence which, under the leadership of Jinnah raised the bogey of Two Nations. Consequently, the communal Muslim leadership was majorly responsible for the partition of the country. In the post-independence period it is the regressive worldview of the mullahs coupled with the opportunism of self-serving politicians that help sustain Muslim communalism.

Sikhism emerged as a new faith when the Mughals were ruling India. Certain unfortunate developments such as torture and harassment of the Sikh Gurus by the Mughal rulers transformed the entire community into a assemblage of warriors. The Sikhs could establish a kingdom of their own in Punjab that was ultimately routed by the British. The community was in the forefront during the freedom

struggle. However, Sikhism like Islam does not distinguish between religious and secular spheres. The partition of the country forced a large number of the Sikhs from West Punjab to East Punjab. The bifurcation of Punjab three ways for creating a Punjabi Suba, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, resulted in the majority of the Sikhs in present day Punjab. The political party of the Sikhs became the dominant political force in Punjab. Nevertheless, the hardliners among the Sikhs started a movement for a separate state—Khalistan—and for the purpose a faction of the Sikhs adopted militancy. Currently separatist movement in Punjab is under check but some hardliners are still active abroad to make Khalistan a reality.

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### 13.6 QUESTIONS

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1. What were the reasons that gave rise to Sikh communalism in India?
  2. Critically examine Sikh communalism and discuss its impact on Indian society.
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### 13.7 SUGGESTED READING:

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# 14

## **Socialist and communist Thought – Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia**

### Unit Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Life and Time of Dr. Lohia.
- 14.3 Ideological influences on Lohias Thought
- 14.4 Social and political thought of Dr. Lohia.
- 14.5 Lohia's contribution to post independent political system.
- 14.6 Summary
- 14.7 Question Pattern
- 14.8 Suggested Readings

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### **14.0 OBJECTIVES**

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- 1) To understand the development of the socialistic thought in India.
- 2) To analyze the ideas professed by Dr. Lohia.
- 3) To estimate the contribution of Dr. Lohia to post independent Indian political system.
- 4) To understand Lohia's views on internationalism, Gender Justice and other social matters.

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### **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The western idea of socialism had undergone many changes in different countries. The idea was differently interpreted, depending upon the conditions and social and political thought which is unique to that country. The socialist thought in India was deeply influenced by the activities of anti-colonial struggle, British liberalism and Gandhian thought. So we find different ideas about socialism-which are unique to Indian context and drastically differ from European socialism - being emerging in India. Starting from Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, it was further developed by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia.



While J.P. Withdrew from politics and changed to Sarvodaya Dr. Lohia continued to be in active politics. As a member of socialist party in post independent India he took active interest in developing an alternative to the ruling congress party. His idea of uniting all anti-congress forces resulted in installing many non-congress govts in various states after 4th general elections. He was a bitter critic of Nehru on some of his domestic and Foreign policies. He wanted a non-marxist, Gandhian type of socialism for India. He was original thinker and it is reflected in many of his writings.

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## 14.2 LIFE AND TIME OF DR. LOHIA

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Dr. Rammanohar Lohia was born in 1910 at Akbarpur in U.P. His family was deeply involved in freedom struggle. His father Hiralal was not only a nationalist but also a social reformer. Because of his family background Lohia became a great nationalist but also a social reformer. Because of his family background Lohia became a great nationalist right from his early days. As a student he stayed at Bombay Benaras and Calcutta. His student life was also marked by his leadership qualities. The influence of leaders like Tilak, Gandhi, and Subhas Bose. was quite deep on him.

As a student of philosophy, he developed rationality and was able to critically analyze the issues pertaining to society. He also took keen interest in history. For his higher studies he went to Berlin. This was a new turn in his life. Apart from studying the western intellectuals like Hegel and Marx he also came into contact with German socialists. This intellectual contact sharpened his ideology. The rise of Fascism in Germany saw the growth of violence, militarism and Racist hatred. Dr. Lohia reacted strongly against all these developments.

Although he criticised the fascist ideology in German thinking, he was impressed by the sense of German nationalism. The national pride that is central to German nationalism made Lohia develop his own ideas on national pride and nationalism. He made an analysis of ancient vedic culture of India and German culture.

His return from Germany to India coincided with the Indian National Congress launching a fierce struggle against Britishers. Like many youth burning with nationalism, Lohia also joined the Congress Party. Around 1934, Lohia who had firm ideas about socialism joined the Congress Socialist Party, which was working within the ambits of the parent party. He was completely dissatisfied with the 'mild path'

being followed by the Congress Party towards independence. He opposed the demand for "Dominion Status" as advocated by the Congress leadership and wanted , the congress to adopt a resolution for "Complete independence" Though it was opposed by the old Guard, at that time, in the Bombay Congress session held in 1935 the resolution was accepted. When Nehru became the president of the Indian National Congress in 1936, Dr. Lohia was requested by him, to head the Foreign affairs cell, which was constituted by Nehru. As an internationalist Lohia used all his wisdom in framing the foreign policy with the national interest in mind. For instance when the British government unilaterally declared India as a party to the second world war Lohia opposed the decision. This decision was taken without the consent of Indians. He put forth a four-point programme to be followed during the war period.

- 1) To oppose all types of military recruitment.
- 2) To organise peoples' movement in the princely states, who were suppressing their subjects and supporting British war efforts.
- 3) The porters were requested not to co-operate with loading and unloading work of goods and material related to war operations.
- 4) People must refuse the payment of war taxes and contribution to war fund.

His agitation against British war policy landed him in Jail. He was in jail from 1939-42. During the quit India movement he helped the cause of country's freedom by organising secret Radio services in several parts of the country. He had faced imprisonment again in 1944 and was released only in 1946. Even after independence, Lohia led peoples' movement for liberation of Goa, against Portugese Government and was arrested twice in Goa.

His life was full of agitations and political unrest. He was criticized as 'Anarchist' by his rivals especially the congress party. He was also bitter critic of Nehru's foreign policies as they were manifested on issues like Tibet, Kashmir and Panchashil. The Political differences apart nobody could question. Lohia's integrity, honesty and his concern for downtrodden.

His death in 1967 was a big loss for the socialist movement in India.

**Check your Progress**

1. Write a short note the life and time of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia

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**14.3 IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON LOHIA'S THOUGHT.**

As mentioned earlier, the thought process of Lohia was shaped not only by the enormous volume of knowledge he acquired through the study of various philosophers of East and west but also his practical knowledge of political movements. The academic background of his family, his early association with freedom movement, teachings of Gandhi and Tilak had influenced his thought Infact Gandhian influence on Lohia was the deepest. He tried to blend western ideals with Gandhian thought. The concepts of non-violence, Satyagraha were attractive to him infact he got his doctoral degree from Berlin University in 1932 on the subject of "Salt and satyagraha." Tilak was another leader who influenced Lohia. He organised a small mourning and shut down on Tilak's death in 1920.

While abroad, he came in contact with international socialists and influence of socialism and Maxism was effective in his thoughts. While in Germany he also developed an interest in international relations. He attended the proceedings of the League of nations, this sowed the seeds of internationalism in him. In his later political life Lohia propogated the ideals of world government, and international peace. When he returned back to India the Indian socialists who were in C.S.P. (Congress socialist Party), influenced Dr. Lohia. In all different ideological forces had a sway on his thoughts.

**Check your Progress**

1. Brifly review the ideologically influence on Lohi's Thoughts.

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#### 14.4 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF DR. LOHIA

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Though influenced by Marxist thought Lohia tried to project a new theory of socialism taking into consideration the socio-economic conditions of India. He challenged certain basic assumptions of Marxism. While Acharya Narendra Deva the earliest socialist thinker wanted to combine marxism with democracy. Lohia wanted a theory that could suit the Asian and other developing countries. He found that this aspect of Asian problems have been completely neglected by Marx.

It was in the year 1952 at Panchamarchi session of the socialist party, Lohia forcefully expounded his new thesis. He wanted European ideology should be discarded and India should develop its own ideology to suit to the domestic conditions. In the process he disagreed with some socialist thinkers who wanted to "indigenise marxism." Infact he found many flaws in the traditional Marxist theory. There are many internal contradictions in that theory. No national movement can completely be dependent on the ideas of one man. Marxism is essentially an European ideology. It is limited by ethnocentric considerations. It takes into account only European nations interests and cannot be universal.

He found the Marxist theory which explained the growth of capitalism from feudalism to be incorrect. The Marxist theory of development of capitalism is faulted on two accounts. The linkage between capitalism and imperialism has not been explained clearly. The colonial people and their societies have some peculiar problems, that requires a deeper probe into working of the social institutions of these countries. Marx did not use a deeper analysis of the problems of colonial countries despite his sympathies to them. He was tied to European interests. Marx thought imperialism is to be the highest state of capitalism. This point has been refuted by Lohia. He argues that both capitalism and imperialism develop simultaneously. The developments in America, Japan and Germany clearly indicate that right from beginning the capitalist sections were seeking external source of power. Capitalism builds itself upon exploitation of others by exporting goods to these colonial countries.

Secondly Marx only described the formation of capital in the western Europe. Here capitalism developed on the basis of exploitation of colonies. But there is a world outside Europe. How capital is formed in these colonial countries cannot be forgotten. Capitalist formation all

over the world are related to each other. We cannot separate and develop only Eurocentric theory.

Again the doctrine of surplus value which is central to marxism is criticized by Lohia. Theory of surplus value presumes the capitalist makes the profit from the value of wealth created by labour. Labour gets a partial wage and the extra amount goes to capitalists as profit. But according to Lohia the amount of surplus varies from developed countries to colonial countries. The form of exploitation in developed and colonial countries is different. The nature of demands also varies in two contexts. Lohia proved that "in case of colonies 99% of labour is transferred in the form of surplus value. While in developed countries it is only 10%. It is for this reason that the surplus value in both the cases cannot be taken together."

Lohia again questioned Marx's presumption that capitalism results in impoverishment of labour. In Europe capitalism had led to a steady improvement of the living standard of the workers. The working class gradually was transforming itself into middleclass because of fall out of capitalist production.

But Dr. Lohia was a bitter critic of capitalism. He held that the capitalist mode of production leads to unhealthy competition and is based on selfishness and avarice. Capitalism is opposed to social values like equality and prosperity. Socialism is certainly superior to capitalism, because it is not based on the idea of the use of exploitation of others for one's own aggrandisement or enrichment. History is a proof that the capitalists for their own profit would betray their motherland. Lohia cites the example of France, where some sections of capitalists welcomed Hitler's invasion of their country. As a reactionary ideology capitalism if practiced in the third world would result in giving protection to profit, black marketing and exploitation.

While agreeing the phenomenon of class struggle as inevitable in any society, Lohia argued, in the Indian context it takes a different shape. Here the class antagonism between workers and employers is not as strong as antagonism between different castes. Despite many social and religious reforms, caste never died. It is at sometimes severely rigid while it loosens during other periods. Lohia explained the linkages between the caste and class in the Indian context. "Caste represents conservative forces of stagnation, inertia and prescriptive rights. Classes represent dynamic forces of social mobilization. History is internal movement between castes and class. Castes loosen into classes and classes crystalize into castes."

That is why Dr. Lohia wanted the caste factor to be taken into consideration. As a technique for building socialism in India he wanted fraternization with backward castes and the poor elements in upward castes. Deeply influenced by the teachings of Kabir, Vivekanand he preached rage and resistance against caste atrocities. For him the Hindu religion has two faces. The liberal face and the fantastical one. The liberal Hinduism we could find in the teachings of Upanishads where equality of mankind is proclaimed. While the fantastical creed which compartmentalizes the society into 'Chaturvarna' and sanctifies, unjust treatments of lower castes has its approval in various "smritis" Lohia explained the greatness of Hindu society was during that period where the liberal face of Hinduism was prominent whenever the fanatical ideas came up it destroyed the institution. To explain this he takes the example of Maharashtra. The Bhakti movement started by Sant Gyanashwar and others represented the liberal Hindu outlook. It reached its highest point in the ruling of Shivaji. But the post Shivaji period governed by Peshwas projected the fanatical Hinduism with rigidity and led to its fall. It is his contention, that whenever fanatical Hinduism asserted it only brought destruction to the country.

Though a democrat Lohia was not impressed by the Liberalism of the west. This Philosophy was centred round the individual with no scope for community. It is an ideology of the rich. It emphasizes right to property and has helped the growth of capitalism. In pursuit of profit it neglects issues like social equality and human suffering. Capitalism has the backing of imperialism. Its policies resulted in "Socialism at home and poverty abroad." The capitalists need cheap labour. They can get it only when there is unemployment. According to Lohia the capitalist mode of production can never guarantee full employment.

**Asian type of political systems** : Dr. Lohia found that the Asian political systems are different from the European model where democracy has taken firm roots. In Asian countries politics is based on caste, religion and race. The government policies are based on repression and opposition politics are based on armed rebellion or assassination. Then there is the problem of the rise of a new class of bureaucrats with Europeanized habits. The leadership is inactive. There is no comprehensive social philosophy.

While some of these faults can be found in India, it cannot be said Indian political system lacked a coherent social philosophy. Infact various philosophies had their impact on the Indian social system like Gandhism, Sarvodaya and socialism. Even militant nationalism had its way.

Lohia is certainly aware of this. He tried to develop a coherent ideology based on his readings and experience. We find in him both the ideas of Gandhism and revolution simultaneously operating. Although not a religious man like Gandhi, Lohia had highest regard for him. He found the weapon of Satyagraha, is most effective for the social systems of countries like India. His reasons are rational. Satyagraha is superior either to constitutional remedies or to revolutionary politics based on violence. The former is bound to be tardy, in countries where there is so much poverty. The revolutionary violent politics can never assure us permanent results.

He said, "Satyagraha, combining moral and spiritual methods, with pragmatic considerations leads not only to the achievement of aims but also to the purification of those who struggle." Lohia gave full support to 1942 quit India movement. He had also high praise for Gandhi's Satyagraha in South Africa.

For the Asian countries, Dr. Lohia suggested the "Four Pillar state'. In this system a method is made to synthesize the twin concepts of centralization and decentralizations. In this scheme the four components of state, village, mandal, the province and the central government retain importance. They are integrated in a system of functional federalism. Their cohesiveness is bound by performance of functions.

### **Check your Progress**

1. Review the social and political thought of Dr. Lohia.

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## **14.5 LOHIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO POST INDEPENDENT POLITICAL SYSTEM.**

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Lohia wanted a truly non-violent society formation. This can be achieved only on the basis of decentralization. He found both socialism and capitalism are based on the productive aspects of economic activity rather than the distributive aspect. With a view to enlarge production they resort to large scale production which inevitably leads to mechanisation and centralization. In both systems individuals are alienated. So Lohia wanted a 'new socialism' for India. He gave a call to combine the socialist principles with four Gandhian ideas :

Satyagraha, ends and means principles, Small machine technology and political decentralization. In a centralized social system human beings are relegated into background. They would be cogs in the machines without any individuality. A decentralised polity provides full scope for all round development of individual personality. In the model "Chauk Hamba" he developed for the Indian society, in which the power increasingly belonged to the small units of direct democracy. The rule of nominated bureaucrats should be replaced by the rule of direct democracy. The units of direct Democracy village, town, district - shall take share in the sovereignty of the Republic. In his scheme the office of collector is to be abolished. He would be under district control. Not less than 1/4 the total revenue and of plan money shall be spent under the initiative and control of district and village assemblies and executives.

While talking about new economic model for India Dr. Lohia suggested, that the economic planning to be done at the grassroots upwards. He wanted the collective control over the means of production. This could act as a check on the private property. The collective property as a whole is to be increased. The government should resort to nationalization of foreign companies without compensation. Workers participation in the management is to be encouraged. Infact workers would be willing partners in the schemes of decentralized economy.

The schemes suggested by Dr. Lohia to rebuild India on the foundation of new socialism, run as follows.

All property used as a means of production which hires labour shall rest in the state. Private ownership shall be restricted to property which does not employ hired labour and which is worked alone by the owning family. Social ownership shall be held at various levels corresponding to various structures of state from village to federation. Effective land ceiling to be implemented. The common land of the village which is hitherto enjoyed by landlords to be taken away and restored to villagers. Lohia firmly believes that state has every right to legislate on property and is not bound to give full compensation.

At another place Lohia sounds like Gandhian, when he says we should develop a sense of detachment to wealth in the society. He says, "Unless there is a simultaneous bid to eradicate love for wealth, the abolition of private property as an institution alone might not succeed fully in its objective". Equality to income and expenditure is a



desired goal. He suggested a ratio that the top does not exceed ten times the bottom. Abolition of Land Tax, on Profitless agriculture and uneconomic holdings; complete utilization of labour to increase the wealth, the use of small unit and power driven machines where possible and establishment of large scale industry, where necessary are some of the suggestions in Lohia's scheme.

**His views on party system** :- Lohia was a firm believer in Democracy. But he found that there is a tendency in Asian Democracies to lean towards elitism which is dangerous. In a way Indian Democracy under Nehru leadership exhibited this tendency. The charismatic leadership of Nehru, the all powerful congress party presence in the political system made Lohia to critically review the concept of Democracy, Party system and other related issues.

He explained, democracy means, "the inevitable answerability of administration to elected assembly. It also means recognition and respect of the limited personality of individual, party, government and state - the four categories which together constitute a series of political action. Demolition of their frontiers and of the definite rules of their operation, end Democracy."

Party system is inevitable in Democracy. Unlike Gandhi, Vinoba, Lohia did not see the Party politics as bad. But what is required is the existence of internal Democracy in the parties. He warns, "Democracy dies in country only when it has died within some of its major organizations."

He makes a distinction between democracy and fascism. The totalitarian or Fascist parties announce the party policy to public after it is being secretly conceived. While the democratic parties openly hold the debates on the proposed policies. Lohia says, "Public issues, must be publicly debated, while private issues may be privately debated."

Dissent is a healthy feature of inner party democracy. Disciplining a dissenting voice would bring death-knell to democratic structure. An organized political party may expect a dissenting minority not to act in a way that would harm party interest, but "restriction on action should never extend to speech." Discipline in democracy does not mean obedience to higher committees or individuals. It only means, recognition and acceptance of limited authority of committees or individuals. When a committee, transgresses the circle of authority drawn for it by the constitution, it has no right to expect others not to act against such decision." Discipline comes to a state or a party, when

the constituents subject themselves to publicly known principles of action, do not allow their energies run waste, because of wayward behaviour and are joined together, through the process of free mind. Lohia says, "Political institutions which enjoin disciplined speech on their followers and permit arbitrary action to their leadership are like an army without knowledge of what it has to do."

**Lohia on Gender Justice** : Lohia felt unless the women participate actively in the policy - making process both at domestic and public levels the country's independence is a sham. He actively sought women's empowerment. He had a three fold scheme for this. Firstly, there is need to change the people's heart. Secondly to build up infrastructure for women's allround development. Thirdly to overhaul the age old social structures which are acting as barriers to women's progress. He clearly stated that the women emancipation should never be looked upon as an act of kindness. Society would only be discharging its obligation by restoring them their due position. We should come out from old ideas that treated women as secondary.

He writes, "Different standards are adopted to judge the individual and social conduct of man and woman. Hindu society has been based on the notion of superiority of the males. The orthodox conventional social structure should be changed."

He is highly unorthodox on issues like sex, abortion, marriage and other related things. In one place he says, "Marriage is not the responsibility of parents. Providing education is." For him love marriages between different castes, acts of eloping is no stain at all. He pleaded for abolition of purdah and Burqa. His views on the need to impart sex education is highly revolutionary as it was coming at those times where talking about sex was considered to be sin. It is here that he drastically differs from Gandhi. While Gandhi thought sex an act of sin and perversion Lohia boldly proclaimed, "One should be frank and clear instead of prudish and dirty. A sexual ethics based on bondage of women will create all sort of perversions. Only a frank, free and clear approach to sex can create a healthy ethical standard. Women should be given some sort of liberty in sexual matters as given to men." He wanted the legalization of abortion. Sterilization and other methods of birth control to be made freely available to every man or woman, married or unmarried. They have a right to avoid the risk of unwanted pregnancy. He was vehemently opposed to the system of dowry. He

had all praise for the culture of Sweden, where the "hospitals have unmarried mothers, who are given special care."

He also lashed out at the blind attitude of giving importance to the colour of skin while judging the women. He says, "the colour of the skin is certainly no criterion of beauty." He wanted preferential right for women.

### **Lohia's views on other issues.**

Lohia dreamt of a people's Democracy in India. He wanted peoples' active participation in social and economic activities. " If people would feel themselves the owners of fields and factories their feeling would bring them that their personal gains are possible through social activity. A major part of reconstruction of Yugoslavia has been achieved through voluntary effort..... If Four crores of adults in this country volunteered an hour of labour everyday, the tasks accomplished would equal those which the government of India gets done in a year's budget." While the statement is quite interesting it is doubtful how far it is practical. Who will organise that volunteer work, Who would supervise? So many administrative issue are involved.

Lohia, like that, suggested many plans which are difficult to implement and if implemented would lead to many complexities. While attacking the system of Education which he opined has not found base in Indian soil, and not conducive either to research or to technical accomplishment, he suggested closing of all departments of the universities except science and engineering for 5 years. This could lead to laying down a new foundation. He cites the examples of Germany and Sweden, which have been technically well developed by workers and peasants, who have never been to colleges. He said, "The entire country should have a network of polytechniques and peoples' universities for the benefit of the peasants, workers and the poor middle class."

Prevalence of a foreign language is another drawback in our education. He wanted immediate replacement of English by Hindi and other regional languages in public institutions. Although this demand, accompanied by agitation - sometimes violent-of Angrezi Hatov, has been criticized by wellknown educationists, Dr. Lohia has his own arguments. He argues, "in the grab of the English language a very slender majority was imposing its unjustified rule over more than 95% of population. English is a symbol of exploitation and domination."

**Lohia on international issues** : Lohia always believed in world peace and disaramament. The Gandhian idea of non-violence, his

participation at League of nations shaped his ideas on internationalism. His approach to world politics is both Utopian and practical. At times he talked of world Parliament constituted on the basis of some sort of adult franchise. He wanted free movement of people from one country to another without border barriers. He, infact once travelled without passport to Myanmar to support his call for an international order free from Visas and passport regimes. For him the crisis of foreign policy of nations is a crisis of human civilization. He wanted people to people relationship should replace government to government relationship." The accepted principle of non-interference of a government in other country's affairs be replaced with the idea of free intervention of mind. He was always for disarmament. But he felt "true and effective disarmament can be achieved only when the world becomes equal. The gross disparity in productive powers of the developed countries which are only 1/3rd compared to the underdeveloped countries which constitute the 2/3rd of mankind. This produces a serious economic unbalance, giving rise to "various forms of conflicts and to the mad race for armaments to conserve the treasures of the priveleged parts."

Dr. Lohia wanted the regional co-operation to combat the superpower domination on the third world. He wanted India to take a lead in Forming a federation of countries of Burma, Nepal, Ceylon and other south East Asian countries.

He also suggested certain structural changes in the United nations. He was highly critical of Nehrurian foriegn policy, which he felt highly abstract. He wanted India to sign treaties with other countries to give a concrete shape to country's foreign policy.

His idea of internationalism never stood his love for motherland. Dispite his regard for Gandhian non-violence, he felt armed resistance to chinese aggession is justified.

In a way his internationalism is a combination of both idealism and realism.

### **Check your Progress**

1. What is Dr. Lohia's contribution to post indepedent Political system of India.

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## 14.6 SUMMARY

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Lohia was man of complex personalities. Various ideologies influenced him. He stedfastly carried out the socialist movement in post-independent India. He was a rebel. He never compromised on any issues. He sincerely believed in people's power. For him Nehru represented an elite oriented Government system. He wanted to replace it with mass oriented policies. Most of his political life is filled with agitations. Yet he is an original thinker. He tried to accomodate and assimilate some of the most important contributions of Gandhi to the theory and methodology of socialism. Lohia did not accept all principles of Gandhiji unquestioningly.

He developed his own frame of reference and accepted only as much of Gandhism and marxism as fitted into his framework. Although he had highest regard for Gandhiji, he did not shy away from defending revolution, use of violence if the situation so demanded.

It is often said, "Lohia was a Gandhian among revolutionaries and a revolutionary among Gandhians".

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## 14.7 QUESTIONS

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- 1) Critically review Dr. Lohia's Political ideas.
- 2) "Role of Dr. Lohia in strengthening the socialist movement in India is Unique." - Discuss.
- 3) Bring out the impact different ideological influences on Dr Lohia's Thought.

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## 14.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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- 1) Verma S.P. Modern Indian Political Thought, Agro, Lakshmi Naraian Agarwal Education Publishers, 2005
- 2) Raj Kumar Modern Indian Political Thought, New Delhi, Arise Publishers and Distributors, 2006
- 3) Grover, Veeranitel (EO) Ram Manohar Lohia, Delhi, D.K. Publishers and Distributors 1998.



# 15

## **Socialist and communist Thought - Acharya Narendra Deva**

### Unit Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 life and times
- 15.3 Social and political thought of Acharya Narendra Deva
- 15.4 Narendra Deva's impact on socialist movement in India
- 15.5 Summary
- 15.6 Question Pattern
- 15.7 Suggested Readings

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### **15.0 OBJECTIVES**

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- 1) To understand the significance of the ideology of socialism in the Indian context.
- 2) To analyze the role of Indian intellectuals to the development of the new version of the traditional Marxist ideology.
- 3) To understand the contribution of Acharya Narendra Deva to the socialist ideology and movement in India.
- 4) To make a comparative analysis of the ideologies of Gandhi and Narendra Deva.

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### **15.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Around 30's Marxism as a revolutionary idea was attracting many young Indians who were fighting against British rule in India. The earlier phase of treating Britishers as guardians of Indian destiny and their rule as noble imperialism gave way towards a ferment nationalism. The sporadic killings undertaken by some revolutionaries while stirred up nationalism, but were not effective in dislodging the British rule. What was needed was a mass organization. The congress was playing that role. But the congress under the leadership of Gandhi was far from revolutionary from the Marxist point of view. His mixing of religion in politics, his emphasis on non-violence, his economic plan of

village centred cottage industries were totally against the basic tenets of Marxist ideology.

The young Marxist who were impressed by both marxian ideology and the Russian revolution saw new way of life in that ideology. For them whether to use violence or not is more a question of prudence than an ethical one. Their aim is to establish a society where economic and social equality is achieved. Large-scale industries, massive nationalization, complete state control of financial institutions and such other Economic measures would fulfill that role. Their ideology was in total contrast with the Gandhian Economics. But the congress party had mass following. It was operating openly. There was no official ban on its functioning like the communist party of India. So some youngsters thought of joining the congress party, with an intention of 'Guiding the congress party towards socialism'. With the intention the congress socialist party (C.S.P.) was formed. Leaders like Acharya Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narain, Lohia worked ceaselessly to give a socialistic outlook to Indian National struggle. Narendra Deva was the president of C.S.P. The C.S.P. was our organization within the congress party, acting like a pressure group. It clearly defined the aims and objectives of the congress party in the post-independent India. Nehru had close relations with C.S.P. leaders. Narendra Deva was a member of the congress working committee in 1936. In 1947, his name as congress president was proposed by Nehru but was opposed by the conservative elements led by Sardar Patel in the Congress Party. It was the opinion of Narendra Deva that after 1947, the Congress ceased to be a National front and become a party. He detested the authoritarian and centralizing trends in the Congress Party.

Though he did not see eye to eye with Gandhi on many points, Acharya Narendra Deva had close contacts and warm regards to Gandhi. In his death on Feb 19, 1956,

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## 15.2 LIFE AND TIMES

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Acharya Narendra Deva born on Oct 31, 1889 at sitapur, his father Balu Baldev Prasad was a well known lawyer and was keen to give him the best education. Narendra Deva's family shifted to Fyzabaol in 1891, when he was of two years and have stayed since then, under his guidance Narendra Deva got good education. He graduated from Allhabad University in 1911 and passed his M.A. from oriental college Benaras and L.L.B. in 1913.

From a very young age he had developed an attraction for politics. At the age of ten years he had attended the Lucknow congress session in 1899, with his father who was delegate. In 1906 he attended

the Calcutta Congress as a visitor. It was at this session that Dadabhi Naoroji declared that the goal of India is Swaraj

His keen interest in the political developments in the country could be judged by an instance. There was a split in the Congress party and the extremists were expelled. In 1910, when the Congress session was held in Allahabad, Narendra Deva did not attend it. It was only when the unity was established in the Congress function around 1916 he attended the session. At that time he was the secretary of Home Rile League and attended the session as a delegate. Since that day till 1948, he attended almost every session of Congress except Coochabhar (1921) and Madras (1927), due to ill health. He also worked as vice-chancellor of Kashi Vidyapeeth.

In 1934, at Patna, the All India Congress Committee met to review the political situation. It was decided to withdraw the civil disobedience movement and return to the parliamentary programme. It was at that time a conference of socialist Congressmen was convened. The aim was to prevent an outright drift to constitutionalism and to put a more dynamic programme before the country. So the Congress Socialist Party was formed. Acharya Narendra Deva was asked to preside over the conference. From this time onwards, Narendra Deva had been guide, friend and philosopher of the socialist movement in India.

He was elected to U.P. legislature in 1936 and 1946. He resigned from the assembly when the socialist party decided to quit the Congress in 1948. In 1949, at Patna, a conference of the socialist party which he presided, it was decided to transform the party into a full-fledged party of socialism on the basis of mass-membership. In 1954-55 he was the chairman of the Praja Socialist Party, which was formed after the merger of the socialist party and Kisan Majdoor Praja Party of J.B. Kripalani. In 1952, Narendra Deva was elected to the Rajya Sabha on the P.S.P. ticket. He presided over the national conference of the P.S.P. at Gaya in 1955. It was here that his thesis of "Democratic Socialism" was adopted. He expired on 19th Feb, 1956 at Madras.

### **Check Your Progress :**

1. Make a brief review of Life and Times of Narendra Deva

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### 15.3 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ACHARYA NARENDRA DEVA

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Many ideologies, thinkers influenced Narendra's thoughts. Before coming under the impact of Mahatma Gandhi in 1921, he was under the influence of Tilak, Annie Besant. In the National movement he was intimate friend of Nehru. He remained with Gandhi in early months of 1947. He was a staunch supporter of the principle of Satyagraha.

He was a great scholar on Buddhist philosophy. His approach to Buddhism is from a scholarly perspective not from that of a believer. Though not an atheist, he felt religion should not divide people on communal lines. According to him the acceptance of the moral governance of the world was the essence of Indian culture.

During the demand for Pakistan and the communal problems that followed he pleaded for sanity and for communal harmony. He stressed the historic links between the two communities. He argued, "the unity between the communities is essentially the result of long process of integration. The unity is slow and painful process. The communal problem can be tackled only by laying emphasis on the economic issues which equally affect the Hindu and muslim masses of the country. Their economic interests are identical and unity can be established only on the basis of their common interests".

Acharya as a Marxist was certainly critical of religion. While stressing the need for alliances with various organizations in the struggle for national independence, he clearly stated "it is the progressive and not the religious or the communal character of the organisation that should be a determining factor in making alliance."

His critical opinions on religion is based on the marxist ideology. Marx held the view that man made religion and it was never the other way round. "Human God was the product of man's imagination. There is no truth in it. It was the firm belief of Narendra Deva that religion is merely the reflection of man's perverse imagination. Religion is a hindrance to the full flowering of human life. He held that religion tends to weaken man's determination to fight for his rights. "To the extent that man attributes various virtues to God, he denigrates and rejects himself. .... A religion founded on the concept of an idyllic other - world tends to make us oblivious to our present responsibilities-" said Narendra Deva. Religion always strengthen superstitions. It gives a false impression that the social system as it exists now, could not be changed. It is an ideal and divinely ordained. Religion prevents social reforms and wants to maintain status also. Religion through false conception of "an omnipotent God, tends to weaken man and stands in the way of man's self-respect and independence." Religion forces man

into a world of sheer imagination, and prevents man's innate consciousness developing as a force. He argued that it is ideal of socialism which presents the true perception of religion and helps release man from the "thralldom of religion and enhance the dignity of man."

It is quite interesting to note that despite his critical attitude towards religion he had very cordial relations with Gandhiji, who was highly religious man. Perhaps their commitment to the cause of nation had brought them together, despite certain ideological differences between them.

**Concern about peasants** :- Acharya was deeply concerned about the position of agriculturists in the country. He opined that there is a double bondage for the Indian agricultural labour. Apart from low wages, he also suffers from the caste structure which had degraded him in social scale. They are treated as untouchables, therefore the social reform which aims at the eradication of this evil system is the most desirable thing. That reform should raise his social status and make him conscious of human dignity" But Narendra Deva is very clear about the 'real' change that is needed in society. He proclaims, "Unless the material and moral conditions of his life is immediately improved, social reform movement, however beneficent it may be, will not go in the long way to make him valuable self-respecting member of the society."

Narendra Deva finds that the problems of agricultural workers need to be looked from a broader aspect of overall change of economic structure. He warns not to indulge in "Politics of peasantism" That attitude looks at all questions from the narrow sectional view point of peasant class. It wants to postulate "Rural Democracy" - a democracy of peasant proprietors. That could develop in antagonism between village and city.

Then what is the collective attitude towards peasant's problems. Acharya Narendra finds in the writings of Stalin a correct attitude. He quotes Stalin, and argues that there is need for a scientific outlook in this matter. The Laws of social change which assign every class its proper place in the social economy of the future. It will be guided by the democratic conception of social justice, but the process of accomplishing the object - will be re-educate the main mass of the peasantry in the spirit of socialism and gradually bring the bulk of the peasantry into line with socialist construction through the medium of co-operative societies."

Narendra Deva suggested certain steps for the upliftment of Indian peasantry. The village can be set on its feet only as a co-operative commonwealth. This must have a democratic base in the shape of free peasants. Landlords, Mahajan, the village exploiters

must go. We must get rid of corrupt and extracting and oppressive police force for an ideal village to be set up

### **His Views of Marx and the Indian Communists :-**

Acharya Narendra Deva gave a new interpretation to the traditional Marxist ideology. The Theory, dialectical materialism, which is the basic foundation of Marxism is accepted only in part. For him marxism is a "materialistic monoism", which accepts the universality of motion. He was a firm believer in scientific socialism. Neither utopian socialism nor social reformism can help us. Nothing short of revolutionary transformation of the existing social order, can meet the present situation.

He is basically an ethical socialist. For him socialism is a cultural movement. Regarding Marx as a humanist, he stressed the humanistic foundations of socialism. He argued social phenomena could be understood through a dynamic historical methodology i.e. materialistic interpretation of history. He gave his views on Marx's ideas as "all that Marx means to say is that an idea can influence the course of history only when it realize infact and thus become a thing. He has nowhere considered the relative importance of man and mind. Both are equally important. Man cannot create anything independently of the objective situation nor can a given objective situation by itself produce a result directed by man without his active participation. He only used the term "materialistic conception of history" to distinguish his method from idealism of Hegel who denied the reality of the world of experience and only recognized absolute idea." According to Narendra, Marx does hold that many causes operate in the evolution of history and it is wrong to surmise that Marx recognized only one single cause of historical evolution."

It is true that Narendra Deva accepted the influence of non-economic forces upon the structure of productive system. Some critics argue that it is not correct to claim that marx attributed equal importance to mind and matter. "Narendra Deva is trying to interpret the marxist monistic conceptions of history in terms of cartesian dualism. Between material reality and consciousness the former was undoubtedly and primary to Marx. His Statement amounts to a modification of the original marxist position" argues S.P. Verma.

**Concept of Class Struggle :-** We find the influence of the writings of Bukharin on Narendra Deva. Bukharin's Historical materialism influenced him. Rukharin's criteria and classification of classes found an echo in his writings. Apart from two main classes - bourgeoisie and the labourers, a society exhibits many other classes. We have the middle classes, transition classes and the mixed classes. In spite of his close association with Gandhiji, Narendra Deva did not give up the theory of class struggle. He attempted to view the social and economic

problems of India in terms of the sociology of class struggle. He found the national struggle that was going on was a middle-class movement. To intensify the national national struggle for independence, one has to broaden the basis of movement by organizing the masses on an economic and class conscious. He regarded the working class as the vanguard and the peasants and intelligentsia as the auxiliaries of an anti-imperialistic struggle. He is an exponent of mass solidarity. He believed in the intensification of revolutionary spirit of the masses and workers prepare them for revolution. The native princes, the capitalist class and the feudal oligarchical forces are the real foundations; of British imperialism operating in India. So the alliance of the workers, peasants and the middle class is essential.

The syndicalist's theory of "General strike" as a weapon influenced Narendra Deva. While commenting on the writings of Gerogesorel's syndicalist theory of "general strike" Narendra mentions that there are emotional, ideological and tactical advantages of "The strike". The strike would result in a total paralysis of the economy of the country and would force the foreign exploiters out of the country. The strength of Unity obtained by organized workers during strike could be a prelude to social revolution. But unlike Russia, the strike as a weapon of political action is yet to materialise in India. Narendra observes, "in India unlike Russia the proletarian weapon of strike has not yet been the signal of mass action, but the working class can extend its political influence only, when by using its weapon of general strike in the service of the national struggle it can impress the petty bourgeoisie with the revolutionary possibilities of a strike."

Narendra Deva felt the masses are the class of future. The need of Indian Democratic movement requires alliances between the lower middleclass and the masses. He believed the economic struggle of the workers develops into political struggle because they are quick to perceive that the imperialist government takes the side of the capitalists and become their ally.

There were two important ingredients in Narendra Deva's thought. The example of Buddha and the thought of Karl Marx. Both the Buddha and marx were initiators of social change. Buddha had sought to change man individually, where as Marx had insisted on a change in social structure. Each was incomplete without the other. Change should be brought both at the individual level and at the social level simultaneously. Being a marxist, Narendra Deva looked upon the fight for socialism as inseparable from the struggle for political independence.

So while analyzing the class character of the congress party he said, "We admit that the congress today has defects and short comings. Yet it can easily be the greatest revolutionary force in the country." He felt that it would be "suicidal policy" for marxists, to cut themselves off from the 'National movement that congress represents." For Narendra Deva the quality of a true marxist is" that he is not dogmatic or sectarian in his attitude. The dialectical method is a living method of great elasticity and who follows it has to adopt himself to the changing conditions. It does not mean he is an opportunist or that he is ready to compromise his principles. He never loses the sight of the the ultimate goal but knows the limitations and positive of a particular situation and he will not sacrifice the gains thereof merely for the sake of a doctrine or dogma. .... He will never refuse to 'join fight for independence carried on by the lower middle class if he can thereby overthrow foreign domination."

In this context Narendra Deva found the attitude of Indian communists totally wrong. They have refused to accept the fact that the congress was the only broad platform of anti-imperialism struggle in India. "The communists ever since 1928 have followed a policy of isolation and it is this suicidal policy of isolation and policy which has isolated them not only from the working masses but also from national struggle. Whenever the congress has conducted an anti-imperialist struggle, these leaders (communists) have been found not only keeping themselves aloof but also preventing the workers from joining the struggle." The attitude of Indian communists is to look to soviet union for guidance. The third international which Russia?" aske was an association of the comminist parties throughout the world was formulating policies which appear to be simply an extension of domestic policy of Russia Why should, third internationl be tied to the chariot, of Soviet Russia?" asked Narendra Deva.

### **His views on communism followed in Russia**

Narendra Deva was an admirer of Russia He appreciated the manyfold achievements of the communist regime. Yet he was not blind to certain serious drawbacks of the system. He held that denying freedom for the sake of equality is very anti-thesis of marxism. The soviet communist regime's apathy to political freedom is a matter of serious concern. He also challenged the dogmatic view of some of the hard-core marxists that marx's teaching run counter to democracy.

Which believes in giving due recognition to political freedom especially freedom of speech and expression of divergent view points.

According to Narendra Deva, Marx was one of the greatest humanist of his times. "He cherished the right of freedom of expression as the most sacred human possession. His passionate advocacy of freedom of individual is well known. His communism pre-supposed democracy." It was for this reason that he hoped that socialism could be achieved in democratic England and America without violence. Narendra emphasized "Marx could not advocate a socialism which while providing employment for people would enslave the masses and take away their freedom."

Quoting from a journal, Communist (Sept 1847), published by the communist league, where marx wrote, "We are not among those communists, who are out to destroy personal liberty; who wish to turn the world into a huge barrack or into a gigantic work house..... We have no desire to exchange freedom for equality", Narendra drove the point home that marxism and democracy are not opposed to each other. Only in a social order based on communal ownership, complete freedom will be assured.

If so, what about the phrase of "Dictatorship of proletariat?" Narendra Deva explains that marx envisaged such a dictatorship only for those countries where democratic institutions and traditions were not firmly established, Where the capitalist class would at once bring into operation against the opposing forces all the military apparatus of the state. Again this dictatorship will be "the democratic dictatorship of the toiling masses" and not of any political party.

Narendra firmly believes "it was not to cancel the good work that capitalist democracy had done by way of ensuring personal liberty but to make that democracy and freedom complete and available for the commonman that marxist philosophy was born". According to him Europe (during 30-40s) parliamentary institutions had collapsed. because the capitalistic Democracy had a narrow social base which always kept the fate of democracy hanging in the balance. No constitution by itself could provide a sound foundation for Democracy. "Democracy would not take roots unless it is accompanied by economic equality, unless social base was broadened and unless the economic emancipation of masses takes place.", proclaimed Narendra Deva.

He blames communist intellectuals for their misreading of events, which led to growth of Fascism in Europe. It is true that Marx had castigated the 'economic man of 19th century' as capitalism, has reduced the common man to the position of a serf. So the democracy that is associated with capitalism was incomplete. It was confined to political field. It was certainly necessary for the communists to show the inadequacies of this capitalistic democracy and to fight for economic democracy. But "it was a grave mistake on their part to undermine all respect for liberal tradition. By their propaganda they weakened the hold of democratic institutions and thus helped in the destruction of liberal traditions" The fascists at a later stage used the same arguments and assailed liberal democratic philosophy. And for his grave error of communists, socialism had to pay heavily. "The phenomenal rise of Fascism in Germany and the growth of Fascist ideology throughout the world became a serious menace to all human progress let alone socialism." observed Narendra Deva.

**Narendra's views on Education** :- He wanted the education should have a social purpose what India required was a dynamic and comprehensive conception of education. The traditional and scholastic type of education is irrelevant in modern days. We have to give due recognition to the impact of science and technology in modern life. Acharya was very apprehensive that science and its achievements could be misused. He says "Science and technology are valuable to solve many problems. We have to take care that science is not prostituted to serve ignoble ends but to serve the cause of social well being." He was bit critical of some scientists who lack this sense of high sense of social responsibility and are ready to place their services at the disposal of those in power without caring to examine the purpose for which research will be used." While agreeing with the maxim that, "knowledge is power", he warns ' it becomes dangerous if it is not used for peace and social welfare but for war and destruction." He also stressed the need to develop an international outlook while solving our problems, because technology had made entire world a unity.

Discussing the ideal relationship between teacher and student he says "it is the duty of teacher to fashion the minds of his students, to develop their character and infuse in them the democratic spirit. There should be free interchange of ideas and opinions and teacher should not try to force his views on his students. He should try to place before

the students the different view points on the question under discussion" Narendra says discipline can never be imposed from outside. We should encourage the self regulating power which is ingrained in human nature to develop itself.

He also wanted one common script for all Indian languages. The medium of instruction of higher education should be Hindi. One South Indian language to be taught in north Indian universities.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. What are Narendra's views on Marxism and Indian tiancs communist.

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## **15.4 NARENDRA DEVA'S IMPACT ON SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN INDIA**

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Narendra Deva and his socialist friends were within the Indian national congress under the banner of congress socialist party. Their aim was to revolutionize the congress party programme have the agenda of socialism as the central point of national independance. This was not to the liking of certain section in congress. On 30th Jan 1948, Gandhiji was murdered. In less than two months ie. march 1948 the socialists decided to quit the congress. Why did they decide to do so, so soon after Gandhiji's murder? Gandhi never wanted the socialists to leave the congress. Narendra recalls, "Mahatma, was of the view that though freedom was achieved the congress should remain a national organization and that parties should be allowed to function within the congress." But immediately after the death of Gandhi, the congress leaders adopted a new constitution forbidding the socialists to function as a group within the congress. While socialists and Gandhi were preoccupied with the problem of reconstruction of Indian polity the congress leaders were more interested in consolidating their strength. They were under the spell of newly acquired power. Gandhi sensed this danger and wanted to prevent congress being converted into a political party. Gandhi's presence made it impossible for the rulers to take action against socialists. With the death of Congress and adoption of new constitution, the socialists had no option but to quit congress.

"Politics is a very strange thing. In politics friends become foes." Commented Narendra on learing the Congress. He was not sorry over



the separation from congress. He was only expressing his anguish and pain at "power politics having eclipsed the process of social revolution in the country. As a committed Marxist, Narendra Deva wanted to fight for socialist revolution in India. Unlike the communists he did not believe in violence and wanted a Democratic methods to transform the Indian political system to socialism. At the annual conference of the Praja socialist party held at Gaya in 1955 Narendra Deva presented his thesis of "Democratic socialism" which became a blueprint for the socialist movement in India. We can summerize the main points of Democratic socialism as under.

Democratic socialism is opposed to hierarchical concept of society. It is against the system which allows the control of state power, political or economic by a single person or a privileged class. In essence it is against all forms of despotism, dictatorship, feudalism or capitalism. It recognizes the entire humanity's rights for democratic freedom and so opposes all forms of imperialism and foreign domination. The social relations and behaviours need to be democratized in the society. It strives to establish the control of working people (labour) over social, economic and political power. There need to be the system of self-government in all fields. The Democratic Decentralization of authority and responsibility evolving a social order based on liberty social equality and justice and promotion of social happiness of which individual happiness is a constituent are the goals of Democratic socialism. It establishes the theory that the people are the ultimate source of authority. It recognizes the right to rebel in case a single person or minority group or class attempts to seize or retain control over government institutions or social power. At international level, Democratic socialism stands for world peace and reorgnization of international bodies on Democratic basis.

Narendra Deva thesis clearly explains how the concept of Democratic socialism is opposed to counter ideologies like communism, capitalism and individualism. Communism is criticized as an ideology which results in totalitarianism, authoritarianism and managerial in character. The capitalistic economic system has led to a division of society into classes and to great social inequalities of opportunities and social conditions. It grants much freedom to those in possession of capital, but very little freedom and security to others. Narendra Deva points out how the capitalism has 'generated class antagonism and conflicts, encouraged parasite illness, idleness promoted selfishness and envy and led to corruption of social ideals." He points out these ills of capitalism has compelled many liberals who were committed to capitalism "to advocate state planning and control."

Democratic socialism is also opposed to individualism. The individualistic conception of society assumes each, individual is an independent whole with private pains, pleasures and interests. It treats the existing social arrangements as contractual obligations, to which each individual commits himself out of his own interest. This is termed as 'Fragment of imagination' Democratic socialism holds that man is essentially a social being, possessed of social impulses and pervaded by society. Society is as real as its members. It is an order out of which individuals arise and acquire their very individuality. "Individuality which is narrowly egoistic retards the growth of personality. The individuality can attain its supreme development only in the highest common social efforts.

Narendra Deva clearly emphasized that democratic socialism 'does not wish the individual to be lost in a crowd or submerged in a totalitarian regime but to realise himself and his happiness in free association with others. Which is possible only in a decentralised socialist democracy. In such a society man will enter into the realm of freedom, will have full and equal facilities for their faculties and personalities and real human morality based on liberty, equality and co-operation will prevail."

He gave certain blue print of action to achieve the socialist society of his dreams. Democratic socialism opposes bureaucratism and totalitarianism. It stands for worker's participation in the control of nationalised industries. On the concept of right to property democratic socialism is very clear. No one can claim an absolute and inalienable right to property. All human rights are social, functional and evolutionary in character and inseparably connected with social obligation. The right of property is not an exception to this rule. Property is a social institution and like all other institutions is governed by social, laws needs and conditions. So the right to property needs to be revised. State should have complete right to acquire private property for public purposes and the power to determine compensation be rested with parliament. The state should actively enter economic field and a planned economic growth should be aimed at. The state planning of economy should keep the ideal of complete and comprehensive utilisation of the available human and material resources. This will lead to maximum social welfare. Encouragement to small scale industries, nationalization of large scale industries development of co-operative farming and establishment of multipurpose co-operative societies are some other ideal suggested by Narendra Deva.

The impact of Gandhi on Narendra's thought is very clear when he touches upon the central idea of how to achieve this ideal society. He clearly warned his followers to eschew violence and be firm on purity of means. "It will not be wise to strive for violent insurrection. There are no short cuts to socialist revolution" He warned. He is a firm believer in democracy and hoped that "through universal adult Franchise, a strong socialist party will capture power." and that will pave way for realisation of the socialist society.

But that did not happen. The socialists were no match to money power of congress. More over after Narendra's death, Jayaprakash retired form politics and the party faced many splits. Yet the basic ideology of democrativ socialism professed by Narendra Deva continues to influence various welfare measures undertaken by many governments.

### **Check Your Progress**

1. Make are assessment of impact of Narendra Deva on Indian Socialist Movement.

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## **15.5 SUMMARY**

The Socialist thought created by Narendra Deva is a synthesis of accumulated knowledge and experiments of Europe and India. He accepted what is essentially humanistic in Indian culture and tradition and boldly discarded what is out moded and anti-democratic. He pointed out our spirit of nationalism should not lead us to reject the accumulated knowledge and experience of west. A craze for originality will not lead us any where. We must be profited by the right democratic and socialistic traditions of west. We must be open minded and should enrich with the knowledge in any part of the world that humanity has been able to treasure. But he was never a blind follower of any ism is clear, when we observe his critical assessment of marxism and its practice in soviet union.

He was an Indian with an international understanding. He was original in many respects. His whole approach of "ethical socialism' is a path creating analysis of traditional marxism.

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**15.6 QUESTION PATTERNS**

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- 1) Critically review the role of Narendra Deva in the development of socialist thought in India?
- 2) Examine the concept of Democratic socialism as expounded by Narendra Deva what are its limitations.?

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**15.7 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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- 1) DIKHIT, C (Ed)  
Democratic socialism in India (readings from writings of Acharya Narendra Deva), New Delhi, S. Chand and co. 1971
- 2) Brahmanand (Ed)  
Towards Socialist Society  
New Delhi, Centre for Applied politics 1979



# 16

## Socialist and communist thought – Palme Dutt. R.

### Unit Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Life and Times ( 19 June 1896-1974)
- 16.3 Causes of Indian Poverty
- 16.4 Agricultural problems of India
- 16.5 Peasant Uprisal
- 16.6 British Rule and Indian Poverty
- 16.7 Indian National Movement
- 16.8 Summary
- 16.9 Question Pattern
- 16.10 Suggested Readings

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### 16.0 OBJECTIVES

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1. To understand the emergence of Communist movement in India
2. To make a critical study of colonial Policies that caused India's Poverty.
3. To study the Political and economical Thought of Palme dutt.
4. To review dutt's impact on Indian Communist Movement .

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### 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the long span of Indian struggle for independence we find different ideologies playing a role in influencing the struggle. The earlier phase of liberalism gave way to extremism. Gandhi changed the political movement from a constitutional struggle to mass movement, though kept it under check with emphasis on non-violence. Around 20's we find the communist ideology slowly entering into Indian political

scene. Their ideology and tactics were in total contrast to Gandhi's ideals of Satya , Ahimsa and purity of means to achieve ends.

Communist wanted a total break from past for India's progress. Unlike Gandhi they did not find any relevance in the social structure of traditional Indian society. They interpreted the Indian social conditions from marxist point of view. The colonial rule was but a manifestation of capitalism. It is a worldwide phenomena. The real freedom is the destruction of both imperialism and native capitalism through mass action. Labourers and peasants would be the vanguards of such a revolt. A firm belief in marxist ideology is required.

Many marxist intellectuals of that period reflected on economic, social and political conditions of colonially administered India. Palme Dutt was of the leading Marxist theoreticians of the period.

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## **16.2 LIFE AND TIME (19 JUNE 1896-1974)**

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Rajani Palme Dutt, generally known as R. Palme Dutt, was a leading journalist and theoretician, in the communist party of Great Britain.

He was born on 19 June 1896 in England. His father Upendra Dutt was an Indian surgeon his mother Anna Palme Dutt was Swedish. After his education at Oxford and Cambridge he joined the labour Research Department, a left wing statistical bureau in 1919. He has always been a marxist ideologue. Infact he was suspended for some time from university for his opposition to world war I. His wife Estonian salme Murrik was a representative of the Communist International, in Britain Dutt joined the newly formed communist party of Great Britain (CPGB). In 1921, he founded a monthly magazine called Labour monthly which he edited till his death. He was also the editor of CPGB's weekly newspaper, The worker weekly. He was on the executive committee of CPGB from 1923 until 1965. He was the party theorist for many years. He was always loyal to soviet Union and communist ideals. He supported Stalin's policies. He did not join the communist group which criticized Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He was also opposed to C.P.G.B.s policy of eurocommunism. He retired from his party position in 70<sup>th</sup> although remained party member until his death.

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## **16.3 CAUSES OF INDIAN POVERTY**

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Dutt's famous book India Today is an excellent analysis of social economic and political problems faced by India during British colonial

rule. He approaches these problems from the marxist point of view. Various issues he touched upon reflects his deep ideological hold on the subject. In a way this also helps us to understand his social and political thought.

The picture of Indian poverty is quite pathetic. Even the British colonial writers and sympathisers of British imperialism have admitted that "three deaths in four in India are due to diseases or poverty" was the opinion expressed by V. Antsey, an authority on Indian Economic System. He is a sympathiser to British imperialism. The Simon Commission in its report in 1921-22, estimated that the majority of Indian population on the eve of second world war was getting as little as from one penny to one quarter penny." This calculation is again based on every factor favourable to imperialism.

What was the cause for such a terrible poverty? Here Dutt shows how the British imperialists tried to put the blame on Indians themselves for their poverty, thereby white washing their crimes. But in a brilliant analysis based on marxist ideology, he counters their presumptions.

One of the main arguments of colonialists was the reasons for India's poverty are social backwardness, ignorance and superstitions of the masses of the people. Dutt argues that it is a case of putting the cart before the horse. These social and cultural backwardness features are consequences of low economic growth and not the factors that contribute to poverty. The main factor is political subjection. The backwardness can only be overcome with a planned economic growth, organized by independent people. Dutt argues, "only a powerful popular movement by breaking the yoke of imperialist and feudal relations over land can open the way to simultaneous material, social and cultural advance Dutt gives the example of social Union to prove his point. "Once the workers and peasants combined to throw off their exploiters, they showed themselves capable of techniques and cultural progress which has left most advanced countries far behind." he observes.

The second factor that British colonialists attribute to India's poverty is over population. This factor is challenged by Dutt. He points out that it is a myth to cover the evils of capitalism which in fact is the culprit of poverty. He attacks Malthusian theory as an apologist for capitalistic model. According to Dutt, Malthus was a reactionary. His theory in 1798, was a political weapon against French revolution and liberal theories. He was offered professorship at East Indian Company's College. Dutt shows how Karl Marx in his capital analyzed this theory of Malthus. "His theory was greeted with Jubilation by the English oligarchy as the greatest destroyer of all hankerings after human development" Malthusian theory of population is a reactionary document. Dutt argues that in Europe around 19th and 20th centuries

the wealth exceeded the population growth in Europe, yet there was misery and poverty. That compelled many thinkers to look for the cause of their miseries in the social system.

Dutt argues the theory that overpopulation causes poverty has been discredited in Europe is being applied in Asia. The Poverty of India is solely attributed not to the social system but to overpopulation. The argument runs like this "the beneficent effects of imperialist rule have unfortunately removed the 'blessed natural checks to the growth of population (war, famine, pestilence) and permitted the improvident and prolific Indian people to breed beyond the limits and subsistence." This argument is factually wrong. The actual rate of increase of population in India under British rule has been less than that of any European country and bottom in the general scale of world increase.

While agreeing to the fact that the agricultural production is inadequate to meet the requirements of people, Dutt puts the blame on the policies followed by the colonial government rather than the increase in population for this. Before the advent of British rule Indian economy especially the village economy was built on the domestic union of agriculture and manufacturing pursuits. With the Britishers destroying the handloom and spinning wheel, not only the old manufacturing tools were destroyed but the agriculture sector became over pressured. The colonial policy of merciless extraction of maximum land revenue from the cultivator, without reinvestment in the agriculture sector caused poverty and degradation. For instance in the year 1850, as little as 0.1% was given to agriculture.

Commenting on the colonial policies which led to food shortage, Dutt points out to the situation during the 1st world war period. After the entry of Japan the import of rice from Burma was stopped. There was a terrible famine and mass deaths. In Bengal alone around 1,200,000 people died of starvation. But this was manmade starvation. The entire food stock had been cornered by Zamindars and traders. The corrupt bureaucracy instead of forcing stocks out of blackmarkets, helped the traders to shoot up prices and play havoc with the lives of poor people.

**Check Your Progress :**

1. What are the causes of India's poverty according to Palm Dutt.

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## 16.4 AGRICULTURE PROBLEMS OF INDIA

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Dutt makes an analysis of problems of Indian peasantry, which he claims is the result of British imperialist policy. According to Dutt, there is a remarkable change in the social structure of peasant before and after British advent in India. Traditionally in the land system of India before British rule the land belonged to the peasants and the government received only a portion of the procedure. The British government introduced the system of landlordism. The extractions from peasantry were extreme and extortionate. It was not based on the yield of land but the holdings of land-irrespective of its yield. The landlordism is an artificial creation of foreign rule. It is purely a parasitic claim on peasant. The imperialist exploitation of India changed the social relations in agriculture. A host of partisan, systems dependent on agriculture developed. There was an increase in the burden on agriculture. A host of peasants started losing their land holdings due to debts. A new class of landless proletariat developed. Their conditions were close to serfdom.

Dutt argues that the situation has not changed even after independence. He puts down following points as the main hurdles for agricultural revolution in India.

- i) There is lop-sided and unbalanced situation of agricultural sector in the national economy. overcrowding, and underdevelopment in this sector is the consequence of "deindustrialisation" policy followed by colonial rulers.
- ii) Stagnation and deterioration of agriculture, the low yields, the waste of labour, failure to bring cultivable land to the cultivation area, decrease in the area of cultivable land are some reasons for poor agricultural position.
- iii) A feature of Indian peasantry is "increase in land hunger." This results in division and subdivisions of the landholdings. Fragmented land is uneconomical to yield.
- iv) The system of landlordism, multiplications of letting and subletting systems, the existence of non-cultivating rent receivers, made peasants economically poor.
- v) There is increase in indebtedness of peasants, and land has been transferred to money lenders, because of inability to repay the

loans. As a consequence of this a rapid growth in the landless labours became a feature.

**Check your progress :**

1. Make an assessment of Palm Dutt's views on problems of Indian agriculture.

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## **16.5 PEASANT UPRISAL.**

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Dutt makes a historical survey of peasant struggle against landlordism and their efforts to ascertain their rights. This struggle coincided with the national struggle against alien rule. According to Dutt, the growth of the peasants movement is one of the most significant developments in the political history of India. Peasant unrest can be traced with increasing frequency during the British rule in India. To begin with the rising was spontaneous and isolated. It was not a well organised movement. Usually it involved in sporadic killing of loyal landlord or money-lenders. It was in the second half of 19th century, we had the famous Santal Rebellion of 1855, and the Deccan uprising of 1875, which showed some organized militancy among the farmers. The period after the 1st world war (1914-18) saw the Indian peasant unrest taking a radical character. The war had shattered the world economy and its ripples were felt in the Indian agricultural sector. The already exhausted agrarian economy came to shatters. The peasants who were most affected by the economic degradation, led the movement to safeguard their interests. This had an all Indian impact. In most parts of the country farmers organised themselves. We had village committees being sprang up. These committees chalked out the programmes like resisting eviction, refusal to buy the land sold in default of payment of loan and unite against money lenders.

Although the Indian national congress took up the issue of peasant's grievance in their struggle for independence from British, it was never exclusively stressed. Being a political organization the congress tried to take support from as many quarters as possible to strengthen itself. But the need of farmers required a separate front. The peasants felt the need to develop their own mass organization.

So in 1936 the first all India farmers association called All India Kisan Sabha was formed. Its first congress was held in Dec 1936 at

Faizpur., at the same time as the Indian National Congress session was held. More than 20,000 farmers attended. The Indian national Congress adopted its agrarian Programme. A solidarity developed between INC and Kisan Sabha from the Faizapur session. There was a rapid growth in Kisan Sabha movement. It expanded both in numbers (around 80,000 in 1939) and in its activities. During the second world war period British govt resorted to repression acts. The kisan sabha took the lead to resist the repression. The fight was against "the feudal imperialist system." The fight was far from over after the independence. In many areas the Kisan sabha encouraged farmers to seize fallow lands belonging to landlords and fiercely fighting back attempts to eviction and enhancement of rent.

Dutt particularly recalls the peasant agitations in the Tebhaga in Bengal and in Telangana of Hyderabad. Especially in Telangana the Kisan Sabha was working in 2,000 villages, In self defence it set up units and fought the fascist Grand of Nizam. Kisans occupied the land and set up their own administrative rule over an area of 15,000 sq miles; could be roughly equal to the area of Denmark. He argues "these struggles revealed the maturing of the conditions and the speeding of the advance towards agrarian revolution in India."

But Dutt's reading of events proved false. With police action in Hyderabad, Govt of India virtually crushed all agitations. The communist party was banned and the movement suffered substantially. It was only in 1967 at Naxalbari the peasants took up to arms which faced the similar fate one pertinent question remains. A fight against colonial imperialist govt is justified, but should the same fight be carried on against a native government committed to the welfare of its citizens? The new Govt. initiated measures to mitigate the sufferings of peasants.

Then how can one justify the call to revolution?

Dutt has clear answer for this question. He argues "The character of the new regime in India and ex-colonial countries is no different from old imperial powers. Their policies are still based on the old monopolist and land-lord interests linked to imperialism. .... Abolition of landlordism has not altered the fate of peasants. In some cases it has increased. The compensation or rent being paid to landlords has not changed the economic status of poor peasants." He also points how, "the landlords have conveniently watered down the land ceilings by nominal division of huge estates among their kith and kin."

He is particularly opposed to Gandhian tactics of solving peasants problem. Lashing out at Vinoba's Bhoodan movement Dutt records "the Bhoodan campaign conducted with official approval by Vinoba had directly originated from the fear aroused by the peasant revolt and seizure of lands in Telangana. It sought to check the organisation

revolt and canalise the discontent arising from the failure of reform legislation, by proposing that landlords should voluntarily renounce a portion of their land. Its significance lay not so much in the inevitably very limited results achieved. --- as in the semi-official admission thus revealed of the failure of the so called landlord abolition legislation."

He opined that the agrarian problem can be solved only with a victorious popular revolution

**Check your progress :**

1. Critically review Dutt's views on Peasant Uprising in India.

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## **16.6 BRITISH RULE AND INDIAN POVERTY**

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Analysing the cause of India's poverty from marxist point of view, Dutt squarely puts the blame on the colonial and imperialist policies followed by Britishers for the poverty of India. According to Dutt "it was Marx who brought a dynamic approach to Indian history, turned the floodlights of scientific method on the social driving forces of Indian development both before and after British rule." It was the opinion of Dutt that the Britishers played a "destructive role" on Indian economy. The British rule represented the onset of foreign capitalism which shattered the traditional Indian economy. Marx pointed out that the British conquest differed from every previous conquest. "The Previous foreign conquerors left untouched the economic basis and eventually grew into its structure the British conquest shattered that basis and remained a foreign force acting from outside and withdrawing its tribute outside." Victory of capitalism resulted in destruction of feudalism and laid foundation for new industrial revolution in Europe. But in India it did not happen that way. Destructive process was not accompanied by any corresponding growth of new forces. So the fate of Indians under British rule represented a melancholy of "lose of their old world, with no gain of a new one."

Marx traced with careful analysis the distinction between the period of monopoly of the East India Company upto 1813, and the later period. The later period marked the end of East India Company's monopoly and the invasion of Industrial capitalist manufacturers overran and completed the work of destruction of Indian economy. Following are the effects of the economic degradation of India. There

was company's colossal direct plunder. Irrigation and public works were neglected. The introduction of the English landed system, Private property in land.

Prior to British rule Indian economic development stood well to the forefront in the world scale. For instance Clive said in 1757, Mushidabad - the old capital of Bengal "as extensive, populous and rich as the city of London." Making some allowances to exaggerations, Variations, we notice that in the reports of travellers around 17th and 18th centuries, India has been described as a land of prosperity. This prosperity extended in Villages also. This is a sharp contrast with the plight of Indian villages now. There was also high industrial development relative to the contemporary world standard before the British rule. This fact was confirmed by the Indian Industrial commission report of 1914-18.

Sir Thomas Holland the chairman of the commission was a leading authority on Indian mineral Resources had candidly stated that the Iron and steel production had already reached a high degree of development before British advent. That means there were enough conditions existing for further rapid industrialization. India also possessed abundant source of coal, iron, oil, gold and copper. Thus 'Indian economy presented a picture of limitless potential wealth and actual neglect and failure of development. The situation was recognised by the imperialists even though they had no solution to offer observes Dutt.

The Economic development and expansion of production which have taken place in the European countries have not taken place in India. The production has been artificially arrested by the working and requirement of British Capitalism, driving an increasing proportion of the population into dependence on primitive and a overburdened agriculture. Wealth of the country drained. Industrial and other outlets of development have been checked and thwarted. Thus Dutt proclaims "In the economic conditions arising from imperial rule lies the secret of extreme poverty of the Indian people." The Indian poverty is not because of any natural causes outside human agency. It is policy of imperial rule that made India poor.

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## 16.7 INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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It had been argued by the British imperialists for very long time that India is not a nation. John Strachey an eminent British official commented, in 1888 that "there is not and never was an India." The Indian National movement was dismissed as a movement affecting "very small fraction of the people of India" Simon Commission pointed

out. They enumerated many factors that prove the concept of Indian 'nation as illusion'. The imperialists talked of "Immensity of area and population, complication of languages (more than 221), Vernacular's rigid complications of innumerable castes, the infinite diversity in its religious aspects" of Indian society which can never be a united nation state, of European model.

Dutt challenges these assumptions and vehemently puts forth the cause of Indian nation. He points how right from selection of facts and their distortion, imperialists played a cunning game. They suppressed all that is cardinal for the real understanding of the present position in India and dwelt on whichever facts could be made to appear unfavourable to India." This is the age old policy of Divide and Rule of the imperialist/

Dutt recalls, how Britishers made similar comments about the impossibility of unity of American people, when the colonies were fighting for their independence from British imperialism. There were many historians even on the side of British imperialists who thought nationalism is deep rooted in the Indian soil. Vincent Smith wrote in 1919, "the political unity of all India although never attained perfectly in fact was always the ideal of the people throughout the centuries." So the modern historical research even on the side of Imperialists can no longer uphold the downright denial of unity of India.

It is true there are differences. But the imperialists only emphasize the differences in order to continue their rule and deny independence to India.

The Indian society is caste-ridden. Nobody could deny it. It is also a fact that caste structure prevents social unity. It is against social equality. But to dismantle the caste structure and promote social unity state should take some action. This is possible only when Indians get power to rule themselves. The record of British government in this regard is very poor. In fact the crippling institution of caste will only be overcome by the advance of modern industry and political democracy as new societies and common interest replace old bonds. Marx while commenting on Indian caste structure said, "Modern industry will dissolve the hereditary division of labour, upon which rests the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power," It is a well known fact that Britishers never wanted to industrialise India. Their concern was looting raw material for their industries. Thus the existence of British rule in fact is an obstacle for Indian unity.

Dutt also questions the claims of some writers who attribute to the backward attitude of imperialists for social transformation of India. While conceding the fact that the earlier period, certain progressive legislations were made, like abolition of suttee system which was

welcomed by progressive elements, Dutt notes a remarkable change came in the attitude of Britishers in the latter period. In the first half of 19th century, the deepest enemies were reactionaries and social conservatives. If we analyze the failure of 1857 revolt, the character of the revolt was it was led by reactionary feudal lords and social conservative rulers. They were exploiting people in their own provinces and rigidly guarding the outdated caste system and religion based on superstitions. It was the dethroned princes who fought for their right. As it lacked a mass base and popular support it was doomed to failure. Yet two things resulted from that unsuccessful attempt. It laid bare the depth of mass discontent and unrest, beneath the surface causing alarm among the rulers. Secondly, this had an impact on social reform legislations to be pursued by British rulers. In fact from this period onwards we find British rulers going out of the way to win the support of reactionary elements against the masses.

This could be clearly seen in their attitude princes and provinces. The earlier policy annexation of princely states into British Empire came to an abrupt end. The princes who are actually puppets of British were called sovereign. The policy of non-intervention in religious matters followed so every form of feudal oppression and misrule protected and even intensified. Britishers used the princes and their provinces as a counter weight to thwart the Indian National Unity which was emerging to fight for independence.

As already mentioned, there was a full stop to reform legislation - a notable exception was 1891 age of consent. Which prohibited child marriage. Otherwise British rule became highly reactionary and conservative.

It may be interesting to note how the Britishers joined hands with local rulers to prevent any social change. It is a well known fact Gandhi took a crusade against evils of untouchability. In some of the south Indian temples the entry of Harijans was not allowed. When Gandhi took this as an issue and led a movement for Harijan's entry the British government dispatched the police force to prevent the entry. The argument was "such entry would be offensive to the religious sentiments of the population which it was sacred duty of government to protect."

The policy of communal Award of Mac Donald which provided separate electorate for Muslims and the attempts to introduce similar provision to depressed classes only proves one point the British wanted an excuse for retarding the political progress of India. The fact that Indian people represented a nation "was not to be proved or disproved in the debating houses of British parliament. The problems of diversity or the multicultural multi religious features of Indian society does not contradict the historic unity." Emphasised Dutt.

Ultimately the national unity could be expressed by its overt action. An analysis of the Indian National movement testifies the fact of India a nation.

### **16.7.1 Three Phases of National Movement**

During the second half of 19th century Indian National Movement made its presence felt. The imperialists were quick to realize it. They, who till now denied India to be a nation and national movement an insignificant feature changed the tune. An alternative argument arose. The argument runs like "Indian national consciousness must be regarded as the proud achievement of imperialism, which had brought it into existence and planted the seeds of democratic ideals in India." Montague Chelmsford report of 1918 proclaimed "the politically minded portion of the people of India are intellectually our children" The introduction of English education, opened the gates of knowledge to Indians about the ideals of freedom, equality, democracy. So it is Britishers who are responsible for the growth of Indian nationalism.

This argument, Dutt writes had an ulterior motive. Britishers hopes that by befriending the Westernized Indians they could transform, Indian nationalism as "sane and constructive: Imperialism would not be treated as enemy. The struggle for independence would be replaced with conciliation and co-operation with the rulers. Finally in the eventuality of India gaining freedom British intelests would be safeguarded.

Dutt questions the presumption of Britishers being responsible for the growth if nationalism in India negative sense it could be true. Their oppression and exploitation united Indians against them. For instance when Japan invaded China, they were indirectly fostering national unity among chinese. But this is not the way Britishers accept. They treat it a positive effect of their rule. L.F. Rushbrook Williams in a book "what about India wrote in 1938, English history taught the lesson of gradual acquisition of popular liberties. English political thought as expressed by Burke and mill reinforced the lesson. Educated Indians essentially keen intelectually, and redily stirred to enthusiasm, perceived a new revelation."

According to Dutt this claim is not based on facts. Democratic revolution had taken place in many parts of the world. The French Revolution, American Declaration of independence had far more effect on Indian than the British parliamentary form. Again it is wrong to presume that Democracy is a patent of England. It is an universal value. Freedom is inherent in each individual or nation and when it is sought to be suppressed the uprising is ineritalse Citing the instances of Russian Revolutions of 1905, and 1917, Dutt claims, Indian awakening developed in unison with the world events.



Dutt concludes "the Indian National Movement arose from social conditions from the conditions of imperialism and system of exploitation and from the social and economic forces generated within Indian society under the conditions of that exploitation. The historical development of the Indian national movement had three stages. The earliest phase reflected only the big bourgeoisie - the progressive elements among the landowners the new industrial bourgeoisie and the well to do intellectual elements. The role of the masses in the national movement emerged only after the war of 1914-18. Two great waves of mass struggle developed, first in the years immediately succeeding the war, the second in the years succeeding the world economic crisis."

### **16.7.2 Dutt's views on National leaders and their policies in the national movement**

It is a well known fact that the earlier leaders of national movement- the moderates were soft on British imperialism. The Indian national congress itself was not the voice of the masses. The moderates knew they were in no position to challenge or dislodge British empire They never harboured such illusions. For them the main enemy was not Britishers but Indian backwardness. As Surendra C. Banerjee proclaimed, the aim of congress "was not the suppression of British rule, but the broadening of its basis, the liberalising of its spirit, and placing it on the unchangeable foundations of a nation's affection." such statements emerging from educated elite could be a shocking for those who viewed British imperialism as an evil. But interestingly Dutt had a different view. He claims that at that movement of history "moderates represented the most progressive politically organised force in Indian society." Elaborating his stands further he argues, "so long as the nascent working class was still completely without expression or organisation, and the peasants were still an unorganised mass, the Indian bourgeoisie was the most progressive organized force in India."

Dutt is highly critical of ideology and political activities of extremists in congress. While they wanted to make a break with the compromising and conciliation policies with imperialism, they lacked a mass movement They attacked "denationalised tendencies of moderates. For them all western tendencies were affront to Indian nationalism. They sought to built Indian nationalism on the basis of social conservatism. The most antiquated, religious and religious superstitions were their tools. There was a disastrous combination of political radicalism and social conservatism. Dutt blames Tilak for this. Tilak led agitation against marriage consent bill, organised cow protection and such Hindu based ideologies. Even in Bengal there was "Cult of Kali" asking "Hindus" to take arms against Britishers one can

understand the nationalist sentiments behind these religious activities. In a situation where imperialist forces are denying democratic freedoms, an organized movement to stir up nationalism, under the grab of religion is understandable, though certainly not desirable. Because this overemphasis on Hinduism led to "alienation of wide sections. of muslim opinion from nationalist movement" observes Dutt.

Dutt stands in direct contrast to Gandhi and his ideology. He blames Gandhi for mixing religion and politics. Gandhi wanted a path to Indian development on the line of social retrogression, stimulating and reviving the outlooks and relics of the past". Gandhian ideas of Khaddi and cottage industries as a solution to the Problem of Indian poverty is totally rejected as Dutt. He Categorically proclaims , "economically there is no future for the artifically revival of hand industry in a capitalist world. The Khadi cannot compete in prices with mill-made cloths, and it is beyond reach of poor." Dutt is very clear as to what Indian requires to overcome its poverty. The primitive methods of production, are most laboriousand less yielding. India requires the most modern technology which can give highest production and mitigate poverty.

Apart from Gandhian Economics, Dutt is totally, opposed to political creed of Gandhi i.e. Ahimsa or non-violence. There are many ideas submerged in this conception. Some were taken from ancient Hindu speculative thoughts and other from modern western ideology represented by Tolstoy Thoreau, and Emerson. On the face of it non-violence is an excellent idea, based on commonsense rule of expediency. Because Indian masses are unarmed, facing a powerful opponent. But Dutt sees some sinister motives in Ahimsa principle as practiced by Gandhi.

According to him time and again Gandhiji used this weapon to check the growth of Indian National movement rather than to consolidate it. Because according to Dutt Gandhi represented the class interest of landlords and bourgerise who were opposed to any decision on mass struggle. Dutt substantiates his arguments.

In the year 1921 non-cooperation movement was launched. The whole country was in turmoil. Peasants refused to pay taxes. Govt. machinery came to a stand still. When the movement was reaching its peak Gandhi called off the movement, because there was some violence in a Begal village, where villagers killed the Britishers. The proposal of calling off was not liked by any, but nobody could oppose Gandhi, as he was "Dictator of the congress" Dutt notes, while the movement was at high peak why he called it off. It is because of its violent nature or some other issue.

According to Dutt, Gandhi wanted to safeguard the interests of Zamindars and landlords who were facing financial loss because of

non-payment of taxes due to non-cooperation movement. So Ahimsa is a weapon to put break on the movement when it hurt class interests.

To substantiate his arguments he quotes the congress resolution at Bardoli. The 3 clauses of the resolution, which called particularly which called off non-cooperation movement tarkeol of payment of taxes to Zamindars. The resolution asks the farmers to pay land revenues and asserts withholding payments to zamindars, is contrary to Congress resolutions. It clearly reassures zamindars that the congress movement is no way intended to attack their legal claims.

Dutt asks a pertinent question if the movement is called off only because of violence how can any one say non payment of taxes is violent? It is the most peaceful form of protest. It is the most peaceful form of protest. Yet most revolutionary. So the resolution which talked off non-cooperation movement going out of hand, and violent incidents spent there clauses only non-payment of rent. whose interests Ahimsa takes care?

It was not an abstract question of non-violence which activated the movers of resolution. But the need to the payment of rent. "There is no question of violence or non-violence. It is a question of class interests" Dutt comments.

Similarly in a place called Garwali, Indian soliders refused to obey the orders of British superiors and did not fire on an unarmed gathering. They were eventually arrested. Dutt analyzes how Gandhi reacted to this incident. Normally as a great spokesman of Ahimsa he should have welcomed the courage of Indian soliders in not restoring to violence. Far from that In an interview to a foreign paper Gandhi expressed his opinion as under, "A solider who disobeys an order to fire" breaks an oath. I cannot ask officials and soliders to disobey.... for when I am in power I shall in all likelihood make use of same soliders."

Gandhi-Iruin pact also a sale out to British Imperialists. Around 1930s when the nation was passing through most revolutionary moments, Gandhi proclaimed that he wants to fight on two fronts. The violence of British imperialists and unorganised political violence erupting in the country. Perhaps he was referring to Bhagat Singh and other revolutionaries. Gandhi-Srwin pact in victory for Britishers as the civil disobedience was called off. But Bagatsingh was hanged. Rightly Dutt says, "Gandhi's Ahimsa was non-violence for Indian masses not for imperialists. who practiced violence to their hearts content and won the battle." The salt satyagraha which Gandhiji took was dismissed by Dutt as diverting tactics.

Dutt's bitter comment on Gandhi is "Gandhi's strategy was not a strategy intended to lead to the victory of independence, but to find the means in the midst of formidable revolutionary wave to maintain

leadership of mass movement and yet place the maximum bounds and restraints upon its."

**Check your progress :**

1. Dutt's view on Indian National Movement reflects a Marxist appraisal. Comment.

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**16.8 SUMMARY**

As a Marxist Rajani Palm Dutt analyzed the Indian conditions during British from a marxist pint of view. He like many communists felt that the 1947 transfer of Powel is a game of inperialists to keep in bondage - this time financially. For him the 1947 transfer of power had many negative features. Power is given to Indian Upper Class closely connected with Imperialism. There is continued economic and strategic domination of imperialism. So the real independence had not come. It could come only through Revolution. He is also cautioning the American financial capitalist peretration to add to British. For Dutt and other Communists India after independence was "last biggest dependent semi-colonial country in Asia."

He analyzes three tendencies were working in India at the time of independence. The conservative trend which seeks to build its programme on ancient Indian civilization and looks modern industrialized culture with suspicion. Then there is a powerful tendency of industrial bourgeoisie, to build a modernized capitalist India. They are afraid of working class would prefer class conciliation instead of class struggle. A vague humanistarian concept of socialism is their aim. The third tendency represents the socialism. This represents conscious expression of the aims of the industrial working class and the basic transformation of Indian society. Neddless to add Dutt wished the third tendency to win and for that a new revolutin of workers and peasants under the leadership of the communist party should take place.

But the history did not go that way. Communists were sidelired in the new political structure and the dream of peasants workers government is yet to be achieved.

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**16.9 QUESTION**

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- 1) Critically analyze Dutt's analysis of India's poverty?
- 2) Make a critical note of Dutt's views on Indian National Movement.

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**16.10 SUGGESTED READINGS**

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- 1) Dutt Palme R.  
India, Today and Tomorrow, New Delhi, Peoples' Publishy House,  
1955
- 2) Dutt Palme R.  
Britain's crisis of Empire, Delhi People's Publishing House, 1948



## M. N. Roy (1893-1954)

### Unit Structure

- 17.0 Introduction
- 17.1 Socialism
- 17.2 Biography
- 17.3 Education
- 17.4 Revolutionary activities
- 17.5 Visit to different parts of the world
- 17.6 Life in USA
- 17.7 Second World War and M. N. Roy
- 17.8 Roy and Mahatma Gandhi
- 17.9 Political ideas
- 17.10 The concept of New Humanism
- 17.11 Critical analysis
- 17.12 Questions
- 17.13 References

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### 17.0 INTRODUCTION

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You are reading the last chapter of this book. This syllabus covers a broad spectrum of ideas beginning from the Indian Renaissance in 19<sup>th</sup> century with Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) up to socialist ideas and politics of Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967) in the post independent period in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Social reform movements during the Renaissance period, the impact of western liberal ideas, Extremism, Revolutionary politics, Gandian ideas, the struggle against the caste system, Socialism and Communism were the major trends in Modern Indian Political thought. All these trends are covered in this syllabus.

The first generation of Indian political leaders represented by M. G. Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale were influenced by the liberal philosophy of the West. Lokmanya Tilak and Shri Aurobindo represent the extremist and revolutionary ideas. Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and Jai Prakash Narayan represent the Gandhian trend. Anti-caste struggle for equality was another important trend of thought started by Mahatma Phule in 19<sup>th</sup> century and further developed by Dr.

Babasaheb Ambedkar in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ram Manohar Lohia, Acharya Narayan Dev, R. P. Dutt represent the Socialist and Communist thought and M. N. Roy attempts to transcend Marxism with his philosophy of New Humanism. The syllabus also covers Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalism.

In this chapter we will consider a brief background of Socialism, a biographical sketch of M. N. Roy and his concept of New Humanism and other ideas.

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## 17.1 SOCIALISM

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Socialism is a 19th century ideology. It emerged as a response to the tremendous exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class which in turn was assisted by the industrial revolution and the rise of liberalism. **Utopian Socialism, Scientific socialism, Fabian Socialism** are some of the major types of socialism.

Many workers lost their jobs due to mechanisation. Mechanisation was the result of industrial revolution which began in 18<sup>th</sup> century. Human beings were replaced by machines. A new capitalist class emerged. They had the capital to invest in business and for them it was easier to handle the machines than the workers. It was more profitable also. There was a manifold increase in quantity and quality of their products. Saint Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen developed their own socialist ideas. They were urging the capitalist class to make reforms and to consider the welfare of the working class. Marx criticised these ideas as **Utopian Socialism**. According to Marx they were Utopian because changes in the society never occur merely because of suggestions. Emotional appeals will never make any difference to the system. The social economic and political system has its own way of functioning and its own rules and regulations. These rules should be understood and an attempt should be made to change the system by scientific methods. This will require a revolution. Marx declared his socialism as **Scientific Socialism**. It was later known as Marxism. **Democratic Socialists** in England criticised Marx for his ideas of revolution and the violence associated with it. They advocated a gradual change in the system with the help of the legal system. They believed in democracy and peaceful change and rejected the necessity of revolution and violence.

All these socialist ideas affected the second generation of Indian thinkers in the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly the credit for introducing Indian elites to the western concepts goes to the British government as it introduced English education, started Universities

and Colleges and through these institutions Indians familiarised themselves with these new concepts.

M. N. Roy in the initial stages of his career was affected by nationalist ideas. He also participated in many revolutionary activities. Later while on world tour in connection with the revolutionary movement he came across the socialist ideology. He was very much influenced by it. He accepted the ideology, made his independent contributions to it. He also led some Marxist revolutions in Mexico, China, and USSR. But in the later stages he was disillusioned by the Marxist ideology. He realised its shortcomings particularly in the context of the Indian society. He left the Marxist camp. He was neither satisfied with the liberal ideology nor the socialist ideologies and developed his own set of ideas later came to be known as **New Humanism** or **Radical Humanism**. The Human being and his freedom were central ideas of Roy's philosophy. He criticised both liberalism and socialism for not paying proper attention to these concepts.

**Check your progress :**

1. Discuss the Various type of Socialism.

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## **17.2 BIOGRAPHY**

Manvendranath Roy (1887-1954) was a renowned international thinker and activist. He began his career as a nationalist revolutionary, later he was attracted towards Socialism and Marxism. He joined the Communist party of India.

The original undivided Communist party of India He became an international figure in the Marxist world and finally developed his own philosophy of New Humanism or Radical Humanism, criticising the Marxian ideology.

Manvendranath Roy was born in 1887 in Arbalia village of 24 Parganas district (near Kolkata) of West Bengal. His original name was Narendranath Bhattacharya. During his life time he changed his name several times to avoid prosecution.



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### **17.3 EDUCATION**

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He completed his primary education in a school in Harinavi village and went to Kolkata for his College education. He was closely related to revolutionaries in Bengal like Prakashchandra Dey, Jatin Mukharjee.

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### **17.4 REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES**

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During his College days he started actively participating in the secret revolutionary activities. Revolutionary activities require financial aid. Many revolutionaries were involved in robberies committed to collect money for revolutionary activities. M. N. Roy also participated in such robberies. He was caught thrice by the Police and later released believing his claims of innocence.

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### **17.5 VISIT TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD**

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From 1915 to 1930 he visited Germany, Japan, China, USA, Mexico and USSR. In 1915 he was sent by Indian revolutionaries to Germany as their representative. He was expected to talk to the German officials and seek help for the Indian freedom movement. In those days many revolutionaries thought of seeking German help to defeat the British government and make India free. Roy also nurtured similar ideas. But he was soon disillusioned by the attitude of the German officials and came to the conclusion that the Germans were not very much eager to help the Indians.

He left Germany and went to Japan to fulfil his objective. In Japan he met Rasbihari Bose. He discussed with him the prospects of seeking Japanese help. Bose's response was not very positive. So he again left Japan and went to China. In China he met Sun Yet Sen. But even there he didn't see any ray of hope for the Indian revolutionaries. (Later in 1941 Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose also followed the same path. First he went to Germany. He stayed there for some time and soon realised that he couldn't get much help from the Germans. Later he was called by Rashbihari Bose from Japan.)

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### **17.6 LIFE IN USA**

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He was frustrated as a revolutionary. He was not successful in India and was also not able to get the help of the German or the Japanese governments. In 1916 he went to USA. Dhangopal Mukherjee, one of his old friends, asked him to forget all his bad

memories as a revolutionary and start a new life. He gave him the new name – “Manvendranath Roy.”

While in USA he came under the influence of Lala Lajpat Rai. He was attracted towards the socialist ideology. He studied the socialist ideas and was attracted towards Marxism. Later he went to Mexico, participated in the Communist movement in that country, exchanged his ideas with other Marxist thinkers in Mexico and became a thorough Marxist.

In 1919 he went to Moscow. This was a turning point in his life. He participated in the activities of the ‘Comintern’ (Communist International – an international organisation of Communists) He was appointed on a committee dealing with the problem of colonialism. He was sent by the Comintern in China to spread the message of Marxism. But because of some political problems his mission in China failed and he returned to Moscow. He had differences of opinion with Comintern leaders. Later in 1928 he was removed from the Comintern. In 1930 he returned to India.

Communists in India during 1920s were closely related with the Congress party. (The Indian National Congress) The Comintern had suggested that the Communists should part with the Congress as the Congress was a bourgeoisie organisation. Roy disagreed with the Comintern on this issue also.

After his return in India he was arrested on the basis of an old warrant. He was in Jail from 1930 to 1936.

From 1936 to 1954 he gradually distanced himself from Communism and developed his own ideology. He was a member of the Congress party till 1940. In 1940 after his defeat in the election for the Congress President he left the Congress party. He established the Radical Democratic Party.

He never favoured the democratic form of government. He didn't believe in the communist model of government. He developed a draft constitution in 1944.

Roy was not an ivory tower thinker. He was closely related to the movement. He actively participated in the movement. He always developed and changed his ideas on the basis of his experience.

Roy actively participated in international politics. It is his unique qualification. No other leader in the Indian freedom movement had such a vast experience of international politics.

Roy had a good number of followers and friends including stalwarts from Maharashtra like Tarkteerth Laxaman Shastri Joshi (the man who started the project of Marathi Vishwakosh – Marathi encyclopaedia.) Yeshwantrao Chavan, the first Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

He wrote elaborately on national and international problems in his own journal *Radical Humanist*.

He has written following books:-

1. The future of Indian Politics (1920)
2. India in Transition (1922)
3. India's problem and its solution (1922)
4. New Humanism
5. Roy's two volume book *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution* contains the gist of his thought and provides a theoretical basis for his philosophy of Radical Humanism.
6. He also wrote a book on Chinese revolution – *Revolution and Counterrevolution*. It was published in 1946.
7. His book named *Russian Revolution* was published in 1947
8. His memoirs were posthumously published in the book *Memoirs*.
9. Roy always welcomed discussion and criticism. After he stated his ideology in the party manifesto, the manifesto was opened for discussion. He himself contributed to the discussion and suggested many changes. Later he published his contributions in his book *New Orientation*.
10. Some of his other books are
  - 1) Materialism, An outline of history of scientific thought.
  - 2) Beyond Communism
  - 3) My experiences in China
  - 4) Our differences
  - 5) Our Problems
  - 6) Letters to Congress socialist party
  - 7) India and War
  - 8) Nationalism, an antiquated cult
  - 9) National government or People's government
  - 10) I.N.A. and August revolution
  - 11) Jawaharlal Nehru
  - 12) Politics Power and Parties
  - 13) Historical role of Islam
  - 14) From Savagery to Civilisation
  - 15) Science and superstition
  - 16) Constitution of India – a draft
  - 17) Letters from Jail
  - 18) Men I Met

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## 17.7 SECOND WORLD WAR AND M. N. ROY

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The Second World War began in 1937. It was a war between the German camp led by Hitler his Nazi party and the allies constituting Britain, France, USA, and USSR etc. The allies and particularly the British declared the Second World War as a war against the Fascist tendencies and colonialism. The British government ordered the Indian troops to participate in the war and fight against fascist forces.

Mahatma Gandhi opposed the idea of participation of Indian troops in the war. The Congress party had supported his stand. The eight provincial governments led by the Congress party which were elected in 1937 provincial elections resigned protesting the policy of British government to compel Indian troops to fight for them.

According to Gandhi Indians were not directly related to the war and for them both the Germans and the British were same. The British were ruling India and exploiting Indians by all possible means, therefore they also represented the fascist tendencies. Both sides of the war were fascist and colonial and therefore there was no point in fighting against one fascist tendency and supporting other.

Roy had an altogether different opinion about all these developments. He considered all these events from a totally different perspective. It was a Communist perspective. He analysed all the events from the point of view of USSR. USSR under the leadership of Stalin had participated in the war. Stalin was known to the world for his high handed behaviour and colonial tendencies. He had forcefully acquired all the adjoining territories of Russia and formulated the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Later Stalin established communist governments were in most of the East European countries. USSR participated in the war against the Germans and therefore joined the camp of the allies. It was not their nature ally. Roy argued that Indians should participate in the war and fight against the Germans as the USSR was fighting the Germans. Indians must join the allies to help the USSR. Helping USSR means helping the development of the Communist movement and strengthening it around the world. This view indicated complete detachment from the ground realities of Indian politics and complete commitment to the international Communist movement of M. N. Roy, beyond national boundaries. He was severely criticised by all sections of Indian politics

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## 17.8 ROY AND MAHATMA GANDHI

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M. N. Roy had a critical attitude of Mahatma Gandhi and Gandhian thought. He was of the opinion that Gandhi was a shrewd politician and confusing the common people with his ideas of truth and non-violence. According to M. N. Roy it was just impossible for India to attain freedom without an armed revolution. Gandhi was fooling people and helping the capitalist class to develop. But in the later stages of his life he changed his ideas about Mahatma Gandhi. Roy was very much impressed by Gandhi when Gandhi turned away from power after independence and went to Bengal to solve the communal problem. He realised that Gandhiji was a big moral force.

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## 17.9 POLITICAL IDEAS

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He passed through three phases of development of his ideas – Nationalism (up to 1915), Marxism (1915-1946), and Radical Humanism (1946 -1954).

Radical humanism is the major contribution of M. N. Roy towards political thought. One of his biographers V. B. Karnik in his biography titled '*M. N. Roy*', says that Roy's journey towards New Humanism or Radical Humanism was an adventure in the field of ideas. "There were no signposts and no guides on the way. Many disillusioned communists had turned to religion after leaving communism; many had reverted to liberalism or nationalism. Those ways were open to Roy. But instead of going back, he decided to go forward. He went beyond communism and discovered radical humanism."

In the initial stages Roy believed in Marxism. But soon he began to notice the limitations of Marxism. He was of the opinion that Russia has falsified all the major claims of Karl Marx. Marx had said that the proletarian revolution will occur in a highly developed capitalist society and it will be a spontaneous revolution of the working class, In Russia the revolution was neither spontaneous nor brought about by the proletariat. Lenin led the revolution and it was totally controlled by the Communist Party. In 1917 at the time of the revolution Russia didn't have capitalist system, it was a feudal society. Even after the revolution the system of production didn't change drastically. The capitalist class was replaced by the state which was controlled by the Communist Party. It was a system of State Capitalism.

Communism, he believes, has contempt for man. “Man had been reduced to the position of a helpless pawn in the hands of blind economic forces.”

### Check your progress

1. Write a brief biography of M. N. Roy's.

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## 17.10 THE CONCEPT OF NEW HUMANISM

Roy says that all ideologies tried to resolve the conflict between individual and society but no ideology was successful in solving the dilemma. Parliamentary democracy and laissez faire policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century raised the hopes about resolving this problem but the ultimate result was concentration of power in the hands of few people. New Humanism attempts to resolve this conflict.

While explaining the core of his ideology Roy says

*“The function of life is to live. The basic incentive of organic becoming is the struggle for survival. It goes on throughout the long process of biological evolution, until in man it becomes **the conscious urge for freedom – the supreme human value**. The beginning of man's endless struggle for freedom lies in the animal struggle for survival. Everything that man has done every one of his act, cultural progress, scientific achievements, artistic creation – everything has been motivated by that one urge. Man is finite, while the universe is infinite, and his environment, in that last analysis is the whole universe. Consequently, his struggle for freedom is eternal; he can never conquer the universe. Therefore, the urge for freedom is the only eternal thing in the human world. This urge enables man to acquire knowledge; he conquers his environment by knowing.”*

According to Roy Radical humanism had taken over the tradition of the founder of modern civilization, the tradition of the revolt of man against the tyranny of God and his agents on this earth. It is not strictly new as it draws its inspiration from the thinkers of the renaissance and from the humanist philosophers of the eighteenth century. In those days it was not possible for them to trace the relationship of man to nature. Modern science has removed that difficulty. Humanism can now go to the root and that is why Roy has called his humanism ‘Radical Humanism’.

Roy's ideas about Radical or New Humanism were inspired by the writing of Friedrich Engels, (1820-1895) a German industrialist who co-authored the Communist Manifesto along with Karl Marx.

Roy believed in philosophy of materialism. For him matter is the basic principle and the human mind is shaped by matter. Human mind is rational and liberty is its basic aim. It is the basic condition for development.

Every thing in the universe is interconnected. Each affects the other. For every event there is a cause and effect relationship to be explored and explained. Human aspiration for liberty is a natural instinct. For Roy freedom to develop the intellectual faculties of a human being and the ability to develop one's own hidden talent was more important than the political and economic freedom.

Roy considered freedom as the most important value. He believed that anything that increases freedom is good and anything that restricts freedom is bad. The search for freedom leads to the search for truth. Freedom, Knowledge and Truth are the three pillars of his humanism. They are interdependent.

He was against religious revivalism. According to him only secular ethics will bring about real freedom.

According to him history is a process of evolution. The present can be analysed with the help of the past because it is always connected to the past. History is man made therefore there are human interests that affect events. Those should be understood.

He always believed in popular sovereignty but excluded anti social elements from the sovereign population. Right to organise was granted only to peasants and workers. They should use it to improve their condition.

Man is the creator of society and state and therefore more important than the society and state. State and society are the means to secure liberty for all human beings. Therefore individual liberty is more important than social organisation. Attempts to limit individual freedom in order to secure collective or social interests are dangerous. But he believes in cooperation as the basis of social life.

He criticised the idealist theory of state. According to Roy, the idealist theory considers the state as a superior authority and totally neglects the individual.

According to Roy law and freedom are not antithetical. Laws of the state should contribute to human freedom.

Roy believed in democracy as an ideal form of government as compared to all other forms of government. But it should be a government of the people and by the people. He didn't believe in representative democracy. He believed that sovereignty is inalienable.

It can't be transferred to any other person or body of person even for a short period. Transfer of sovereignty means loss of sovereignty.

Roy believed in party less democracy. He criticised parties as instruments of concentration of power. Parties indulge in the race for power. They believe that nothing can happen without power. People of questionable character occupy positions of public trust only because they belong to a certain famous party. A party prefers people who will be of great help in capturing power. It doesn't care for intellectuals or morally integrated people. Parties serve the purpose of promoting the ambition of individuals.

Instead of political parties he suggested the formation of people's committees. These committees will consist of 2% population of a locality. They will elect their representatives in the national parliament and control the government. The respective committees will control their representatives. Thus the committees will have real power.

### **Check your progress**

1. Explain M. N. Roy's concept of New Humanism.

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## **17.11 CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

Roy's ideas about the formation of people's committees are unrealistic. Formation of such committees require enlightened, alert and educated masses. These committees will make only symbolic difference to the current representative system as they will consist only two percent of the population of a particular town or village. 98% people will not have their say in the political system.

## **17.12 QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss M. N. Roy's contribution to Communist ideas
2. Describe the development of M. N. Roy's ideas through Nationalism, Socialism, Communism and New Humanism
3. Critically examine M. N. Roy's concept of New Humanism
4. Write short notes on
  - i) Indian Communism



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### 17.13 REFERENCES

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