

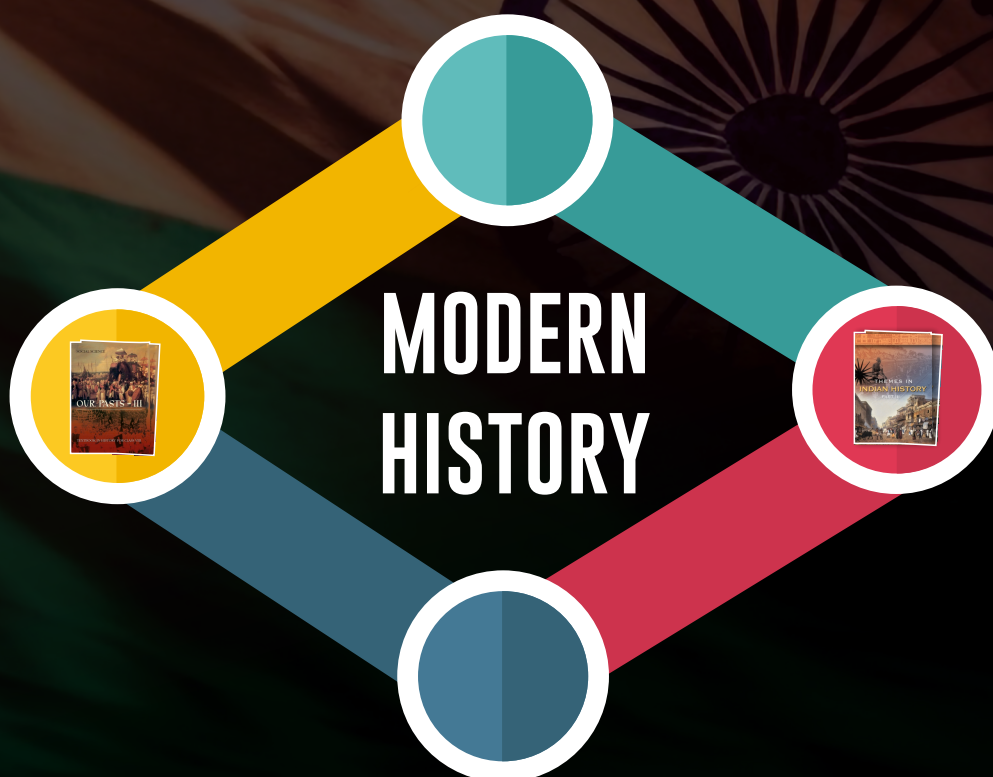


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# MODERN HISTORY

## FOR CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION



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**Alakh Pandey**

Every chapter consists of 'Points to Ponder,' where our leaders raise thinking points for the students to go beyond the confines of the book. The students are expected to think about and find out possible answers to these points. The Caricatures used are inspired by Alakh Pandey Sir and Sumit Rewri Sir.



**Sumit Rewri**



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# Introduction: When, Where and How

**Bibliography:** This chapter encompasses the summary of **Chapter 1 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III)

## Introduction

History is not just about timeline, but also **about changes that occur over time**. It is about finding out how things were in the past and how things have changed.

Asking **historical questions** makes us wonder and curious about the past events and we ask questions that are actually historical.

## How Important are Dates?

- ❖ Even today, the historical timeline continues to be important to be informed regarding wars and movements; but now the focus is also on the way of livelihood, cities development, how kingdoms were formed and new ideas spread, and how cultures and society changed.
- ❖ Figure 1.1 shows how old advertisements help us understand how markets for new products were created and new tastes were popularized. This 1922 advertisement for Lipton tea suggests that royalty all over the world is associated with this tea. In the background you see the outer wall of an Indian palace, while in the foreground, seated on horseback is the third son of Queen Victoria of Britain, Prince Arthur, who was given the title Duke of Connaught.



**Figure 1.1: Advertisements help create taste**

## Which Dates?

- ❖ The dates, per se, do not become important, they become vital because of the focus on a particular set of events.
- ❖ The significance of dates also changes if the focus of study shifts to different events or issues.

## How Do We Periodise?

- ❖ Periodising history helps capture the unique characteristics of specific time, and also allows us to identify and highlight the central features of each period.

### COLONIZATION

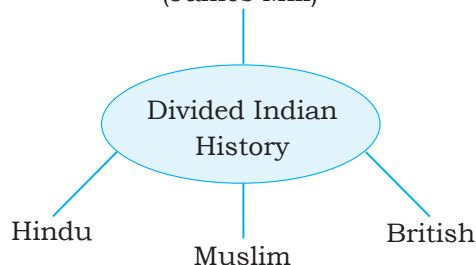
- The British arrived in the country with the aim of conquering it and establishing their authority. They achieved this by subduing local rule and implementing control over the economy and society. They collected revenue to cover their expenses, acquired goods at low prices, and cultivated crops for export.
- As a result, British rule led to significant transformation in values, customs, and practices, effecting the political economic, social and cultural aspects of the country. This is commonly referred to as colonization.



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- ❖ For example **James Mill** in his three-volume work, **A History of British India (1817)**, divided Indian history into three periods – Hindu, Muslim and British.
- ❖ Further moving away from British classification, historians have also divided Indian history into **‘ancient’, ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’**. This periodisation was borrowed from the West where the **modern period** was associated with the growth of all the modern influences and developments and **Medieval** to describe a society where these features of modern society did not exist.

A History of British India (1817)  
(James Mill)



## How Do We Know?

### Administrative Records:

- ❖ The British **believed in the act of writing** all instructions, plans, policy decisions, agreements, investigations, which produced an administrative culture of memos, notings and reports.
- ❖ They also preserved important documents and letters through **record rooms** attached to all administrative institutions.
- ❖ Specialized institutions like **archives and museums** were also established to preserve important records **(Refer Figure 1.2)**



**Figure 1.2: The National Archives of India came up in the 1920s. When New Delhi was built, the National Museum and the National Archives were both located close to the Viceregal Palace. This location reflects the importance these institutions had in British imagination.**

- ❖ These documents were recorded and written by skilled calligraphists, and with the spread of printing, multiple copies of these records were printed as proceedings of each government department.

### Surveys and Census:

- ❖ **Revenue Surveys:** To carry out effective administration, the British carried out detailed surveys in the early nineteenth century. In the villages, **revenue surveys** were conducted to know about the topography, the soil quality, the flora, the fauna, the local histories, and the cropping pattern.
- ❖ **Census:** By the end of the nineteenth century, **Census operations** were also held every ten years to record the number of people in all the provinces of India, noting information on castes, religion and occupation.

#### POINTS TO PONDER

History is understood as the story of kings, kingdoms, wars, events, civilizations. We saw how administrative records, surveys and census help us in knowing history. Can you think of other sources to recreate and understand history like scriptures, monuments etc?





- ❖ **Other Surveys:** Other than these, botanical surveys, zoological surveys, archaeological surveys, anthropological surveys, forest surveys were also carried out.

### Limitations with Official Records:

- ❖ The official records of the British tell a story from one perspective, i.e. the records talk about what they were interested in, and what they wished to preserve for posterity. These records totally ignore what general people felt and the reason behind their actions.
- ❖ People's perspective can be understood through diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims and travelers, autobiographies of important personalities, popular booklets, printing and newspapers.



**Figure 1.4: Mapping and survey operations in progress in Bengal, a drawing by James Prinsep, 1832**

### Conclusion

The significance of historical dates cannot be emphasized enough. Dates play a vital role as key reference points that aid in structuring and comprehending the vast scope of human history. They offer a chronological framework enabling historians and scholars to analyze events, patterns, and progressions throughout time. Furthermore, dates are indispensable for establishing causal links, grasping historical context, and tracing the development of societies, cultures, and civilizations. Without specific dates, history would be a disorderly and perplexing narrative, making it challenging to extract valuable insights from the past. Thus, historical dates not only underpin our comprehension of history but also empower us to learn from it, guiding us as we navigate the present and shape the future.

### Reports to the Home Department

In 1946 the colonial government in India was trying to put down a mutiny that broke out on the ships of the Royal Indian Navy. Here is a sample of the kind of reports the Home Department got from the different dockyards:

**Bombay:** Arrangements have been made for the Army to take over ships and establishment. Royal Navy ships are remaining outside the harbour.

**Karachi:** 301 mutineers are under arrest and a few more strongly suspected are to be arrested ... All establishments ... are under military guard.

**Vizagapatnam:** The position is completely under control and no violence has occurred. Military guards have been placed on ships and establishments. No further trouble is expected except that a few men may refuse to work.

*Director of Intelligence, HQ.*

**Figure 1.3:** Recorded document

**Glossary**

- **Historical questions:** These are the questions about what we see around us which refer us back to notions of time.
- **Periodise:** The practice of dividing the past into distinct chronological periods or eras based on certain criteria or characteristics.
- **Archive:** Refers to a collection of historical records, documents, manuscripts, and other primary source materials that are systematically preserved and organized for research, reference, and historical analysis.
- **Survey:** The purpose of survey is to gather, analyze, and present information in an organized and structured manner, often with the aim of drawing meaningful conclusions or insights about the subject under consideration.
- **Census:** A census refers to a systematic and comprehensive enumeration of the population, often accompanied by the collection of various demographic, social, and economic data about the individuals within a specific geographical area at a particular point in time.





# From Trade to Territory

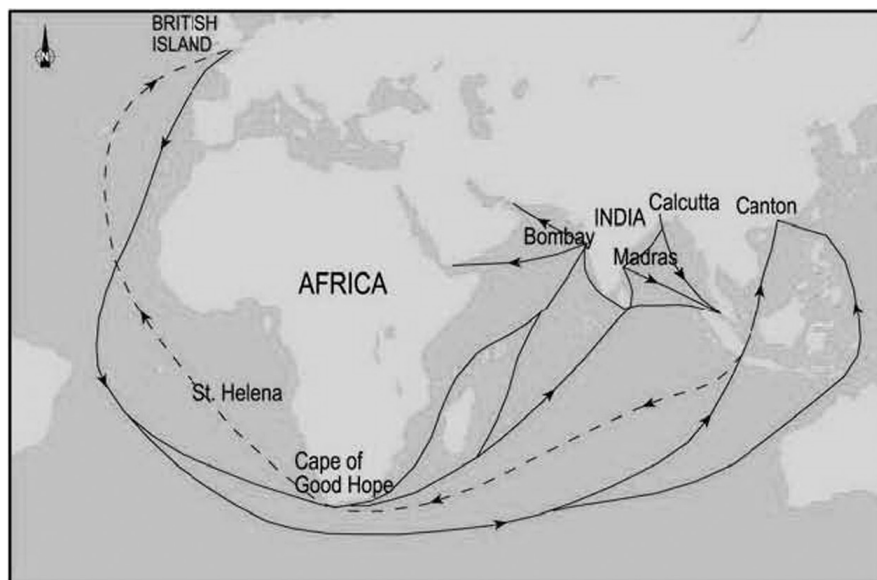
**Bibliography:** This chapter encompasses the summary of **Chapter 2 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III)

## Introduction

The last powerful Mughal ruler, **Aurangzeb**, established control over a very large part of the Indian territory. However, upon his **demise in 1707**, the empire's grip began to weaken, giving rise to the **emergence of powerful regional kingdoms** as Mughal governors and influential zamindars sought to assert their authority. This emergence of powerful regional kingdoms in various parts of India turned Mughals' capital ineffective as a governing centre. By the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the entry of British in the subcontinent as a trading company changed the course of Indian history.

## East India Company Comes To The East

- ❖ The royal charter of 1600, granted by **Queen Elizabeth-I** gave sole right to trade with the East to the East India Company:
  - ✧ No other trading group in England could compete with the East India Company.
  - ✧ It allowed the company to explore new lands to buy goods at low prices and sell them in Europe for profit, with no fear of competition from other English trading companies.



**Figure 2.1: Routes to India in the eighteenth century**

- ❖ The charter could not prevent other European powers like the Portuguese, Dutch, and French who had already established a presence in the Eastern markets.



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- ❖ Trade items like fine qualities of **cotton and silk, pepper, cloves, cardamom and cinnamon** were of common interest to the trading companies due to their high demand.
- ❖ Fierce competition for markets led trading companies to engage in battles, fortify posts, and clash with local rulers, blurring the lines between trade and politics.

### East India Company Begins Trade in Bengal:

- ❖ The first English **factory set up in 1651** on the banks of Hugli river, acted as the base from where company's traders known as "**factors**" operated.
- ❖ Initially, the factory acted as a **warehouse** and, as trade expanded, the Company persuaded merchants and traders to come and settle near the factory.
- ❖ By 1696, the Company began **constructing a fort** around the settlement for protection.
- ❖ The Company secured **zamindari rights** over three villages, including Kalikata, which later grew into the city of Calcutta (present day Kolkata). It also persuaded the **Mughal emperor Aurangzeb to issue a farman** granting the Company the right to trade duty free.
- ❖ The Company's **greediness for more concessions and exploitation of existing privileges** led to disputes.
  - ❖ For instance, although Aurangzeb's farman granted duty-free trade rights only to the Company, Company officials engaged in private trade and refused to pay duties, causing significant revenue loss for Bengal.

### How Trade Led to Battles:

- ❖ **Resistance from Capable Rulers:** After the **death of Aurangzeb**, the regional powers started asserting their power and autonomy, Bengal was no exception.
  - ❖ **Murshid Quli Khan, Alivardi Khan, and Sirajuddaulah** were all capable rulers who started opposing the Company's exploitation.
  - ❖ They refused to grant the Company concessions, demanded large tributes for the Company's right to trade, **denied it any right to mint coins**, and stopped it from extending its fortifications.
  - ❖ They accused the Company of deceit, loss of revenue, undermining the authority of the nawab and engaging in disrespectful behavior.
- ❖ **Company's Stand:** The Company defended saying that unjust demands of the local officials were ruining the trade of the Company, and trade could flourish only if the duties were removed.
  - ❖ In order to expand the trade it started enlarging its settlements, buying up villages, and rebuilding its forts.
- ❖ In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century these disputes eventually led to confrontations and culminated in the historic **Battle of Plassey**.

### The Nawab complains

In 1733 the Nawab of Bengal said this about the English traders:

When they first came into the country they petitioned the then government in a humble manner for liberty to purchase a spot of ground to build a factory house upon, which was no sooner granted but they built a strong fort, surrounded it with a ditch which has communication with the river and mounted a great number of guns upon the walls. They have enticed several merchants and others to go and take protection under them and they collect a revenue which amounts to Rs. 100,000... they rob and plunder and carry great number of the king's subjects of both sexes into slavery into their own country ...



## The Battle of Plassey:

### ❖ Reasons:

- ❖ Upon the death of Alivardi Khan in 1756, **Siraj ud-Daulah** assumed the position of Nawab in Bengal. The East India Company was concerned about his authority and aimed to establish a pliant ruler who would grant trade benefits.
- ❖ Consequently, they attempted, unsuccessfully, to support one of Siraj ud-Daulah's rivals in his bid for the Nawab's position.
- ❖ In response, an angered Siraj ud-Daulah demanded that the Company cease its interference in his realm's politics, halt fortification efforts, and fulfill their revenue payments.
- ❖ After failed negotiations, the **Nawab conquered the English factory at Kasimbazar** with 30,000 soldiers. Further marching into Calcutta to establish control over the Company's fort.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know how Plassey got its name? Plassey is an anglicised pronunciation of Palashi and the place derived its name from the *palash* tree known for its beautiful red flowers that yield *gulal*, the powder used in the festival of Holi.

- ❖ Hearing about Calcutta's fall, Company officials in Madras sent forces **under the command of Robert Clive** and also held prolonged negotiations with the Nawab.
- ❖ Finally, in 1757, Robert Clive defeated Siraj ud-Daulah at Plassey, one of the key factors in the Nawab's defeat was the **non-participation of Mir Jafar**, one of Siraj ud-Daulah's commanders, who had been promised the position of nawab by Clive in exchange for his support.
- ❖ The Battle of Plassey marked a **significant milestone** as it represented the first major victory for the East India Company in India.

### ❖ Aftermath:

- ❖ Mir Jafar was made the nawab, and the Company, unwilling to take over the responsibility of administration, stuck to the expansion of trade.
- ❖ The puppet Nawabs in their quest for dignity and sovereignty seemed challenging to the Company, which deposed Mir Jafar and replaced him with Mir Qasim, who was later defeated at **Buxar in 1764**, and Mir Jafar was reinstated.
- ❖ In 1765, the Mughal emperor appointed the Company as the **Diwan of Bengal**, allowing access to the province's vast revenue resources.
- ❖ This **Diwani right** solved the Company's problem of importing gold and silver from Britain to buy goods in India, as revenues could now finance Company's expenses like maintaining troops, building the Company's fort and offices in Calcutta and also for purchasing textiles in India.

### POINTS TO PONDER

The poet Nabî Sen characterizes the Battle of Plassey as a moment of enduring darkness in India's history, one that altered the trajectory of the nation. Have you ever pondered how India's history might have unfolded had the Battle of Plassey never taken place?



## Company Officials as “Nabobs”

- ❖ After the Battle of Plassey, the actual Nawabs of Bengal were compelled to give land and substantial sums of money as personal gifts to Company officials, making the Company officials more powerful and authoritative.
- ❖ For instance Robert Clive amassed a substantial fortune during his time in India. Not all Company officials achieved wealth like Clive. Many succumbed to disease and war in India, and not all of them were corrupt.
- ❖ The officials who managed to return with wealth led flashy lives and flaunted their riches. They were called “nabobs” – **an anglicized version of the Indian word nawab**.



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## Company Rule Expands

- ❖ East India Company from 1757 to 1857 instead of direct military attacks on unfamiliar territories, used a **variety of political, economic and diplomatic methods** to extend its influence before annexing an Indian kingdom, as follows:

### 1. Residents in Indian States:

- ❑ After the Battle of Buxar in 1764, the Company appointed **Residents in Indian states**, who served as political or commercial agents to advance the Company's interests,
- ❑ Through the Residents, the Company officials began interfering in the internal affairs of Indian states, including decisions on succession and administrative appointments.

### 2. Subsidiary Alliances:

- ❑ Under the alliance, Indian rulers were not allowed to have their independent armed forces.
- ❑ Company provided protection but charged for maintaining **"subsidiary forces"**. Failure to make payments resulted in the loss of territory as a penalty.
- ❑ During **Richard Wellesley's** time as Governor-General (1798–1805), the Nawab of **Awadh** lost over half of his land to the East India Company in 1801 for failing to pay for "subsidiary forces." **Hyderabad** faced similar territorial losses under similar circumstances.

## Tipu Sultan – The "Tiger of Mysore":

- ❖ The East India Company Resorted to direct military action when it perceived a threat to its political or economic interests, as seen in the case of Mysore in southern India.
- ❖ **Reasons for Anglo-Mysore War:**
  - ✧ Mysore had become a powerful state under leaders like **Haidar Ali** (ruled 1761-1782) and his son **Tipu Sultan** (ruled 1782-1799).
  - ✧ Mysore controlled the **lucrative trade of the Malabar coast**, where the Company purchased valuable commodities like pepper and cardamom, hence commanding trade through these ports and also prohibited local merchants from trading with the Company.

### What power did the Resident have?

This is what James Mill, the famous economist and political philosopher from Scotland, wrote about the residents appointed by the Company.

We place a resident, who really is king of the country, whatever **injunctions** of non-interference he may act under. As long as the prince acts in perfect **subservience**, and does what is agreeable to the residents, that is, to the British Government, things go on quietly; they are managed without the resident appearing much in the administration of affairs ... but when anything of a different nature happens, the moment the prince takes a course which the British Government think wrong, then comes clashing and disturbance.

*James Mill (1832)*

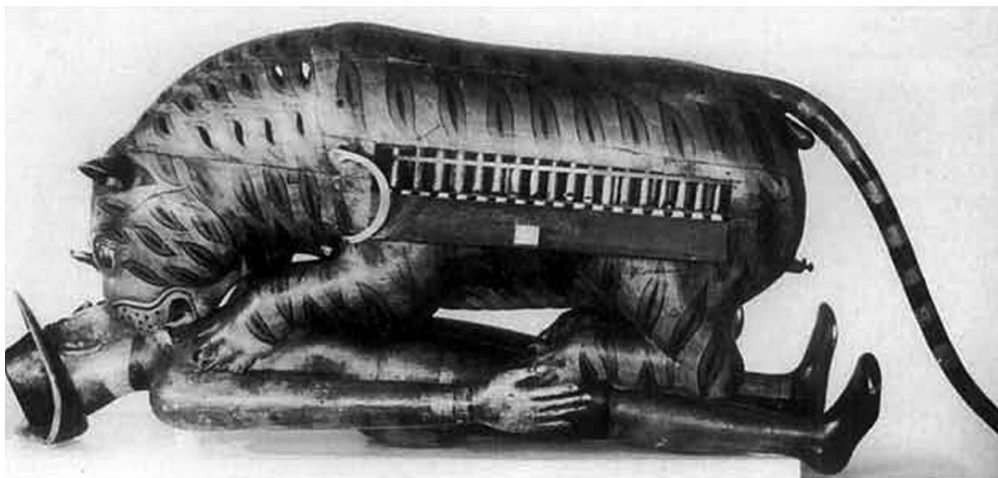
### THE LEGEND OF TIPU

Kings are often surrounded by legend and their powers glorified through folklore. Here is a legend about Tipu Sultan who became the ruler of Mysore in 1782. It is said that once he went hunting in the forest with a French friend. There he came face to face with a tiger. His gun did not work and his dagger fell to the ground. He battled with the tiger unarmed until he managed to reach down and pick up the dagger. Finally, he was able to kill the tiger in the battle. After this, he came to be known as the "Tiger of Mysore". He had the image of the tiger on his flag.

- ✧ Tipu established close **relationships with the French** in India, and modernized his army with their help.

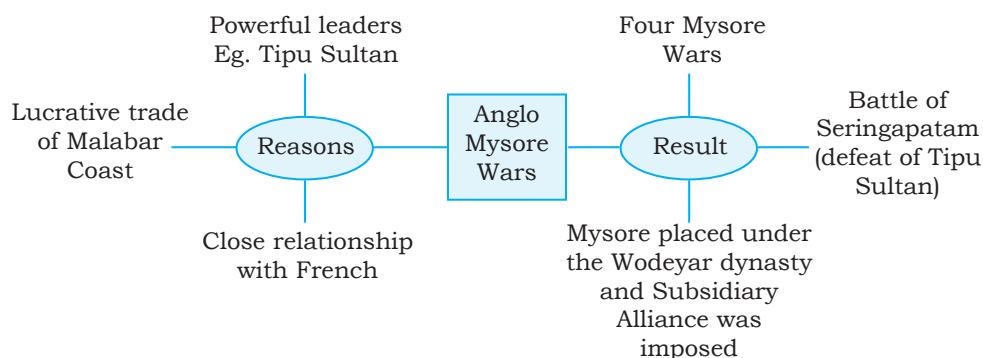
#### ❖ **Result of the War:**

- ✧ The British perceived Haidar and Tipu as ambitious and dangerous rulers who needed to be controlled and subdued, leading to **four wars with Mysore** (1767 – 69, 1780 – 84, 1790 – 92, and 1799).



**Figure 2.2: Tipu's toy tiger** This is the picture of a big mechanical toy that Tipu possessed, now kept in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The British took it away when Tipu Sultan died defending his capital Seringapatam on 4 May 1799.

- ✧ The Company was victorious in the **Battle of Seringapatam**, where Tipu Sultan was killed while defending his capital.
- ✧ Mysore was placed under the former ruling dynasty of the Wodeyars and a subsidiary alliance was imposed on the state.

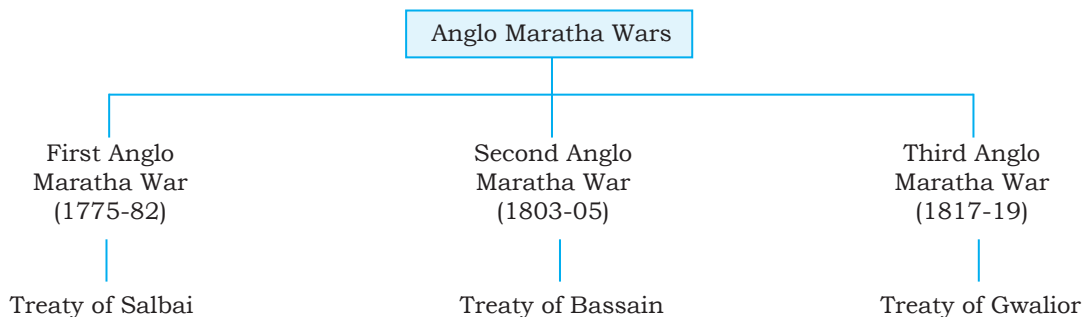


### **War with the Marathas**

#### ❖ **Political Structure:**

- ✧ The **third Battle of Panipat in 1761**, shattered Maratha ambition of ruling from Delhi.
- ✧ The Marathas were divided into multiple states led by different chiefs (sardars) from dynasties like Scindia, Holkar, Gaikwad, and Bhonsle.
- ✧ These chiefs were held together in a **confederacy under a Peshwa** (Principal Minister) who became its effective military and administrative head based in Pune.

## ❖ A Series of Wars:



- ❖ The first war, ending in 1782 with the **Treaty of Salbai**, resulted in no clear victory.
- ❖ The **Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803–05)** fought on different fronts, led to the British gaining Orissa and territories north of the Yamuna River, including Agra and Delhi.
- ❖ In the **Third Anglo-Maratha War (1817–19)**, **Company crushed Maratha power**, leading to the removal of the Peshwa, who was sent to Bithur in Kanpur with a pension, also Company gaining control over territories south of the Vindhyas.

### POINTS TO PONDER

The Anglo-Mysore Wars and the Anglo-Maratha Wars occurred during roughly the same period. These kingdoms shared a common adversary in the British. What factors do you believe hindered both these specific kingdoms and, in a broader sense, all other Indian kingdoms from forming a united front against the British?

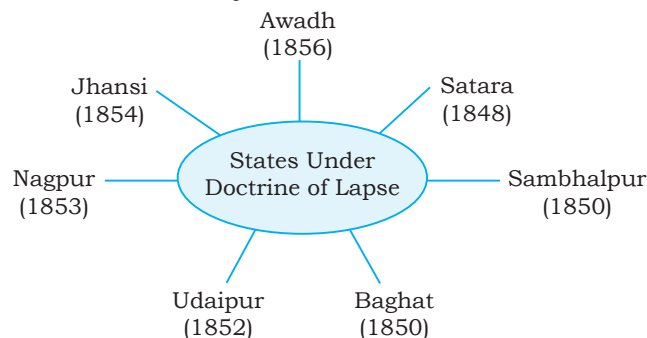


## The Claim to Paramountcy:

- ❖ In the early nineteenth century, the Company adopted an aggressive policy of territorial expansion.
- ❖ **Lord Hastings** (Governor-General from 1813 to 1823), introduced a new **policy of “paramountcy”**, claiming that its authority was supreme and paramount and hence, the annexation of Indian kingdoms to protect the Company’s interests was justified.
- ❖ **Examples of Paramountcy:**
  - ❖ **Rani Channamma** led a popular anti-British resistance movement against this paramountcy policy when the British attempted to annex the small state of Kitoor in Karnataka.
  - ❖ In the late 1830s, the Company in fear of Russian expansion tried to fortify the north western region, in this quest it engaged in a prolonged war with Afghanistan between 1838 and 1842, establishing indirect Company rule there.
  - ❖ After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, two prolonged wars were fought with the Sikh kingdom, ultimately leading to the annexation of Punjab in 1849.

## The Doctrine of Lapse:

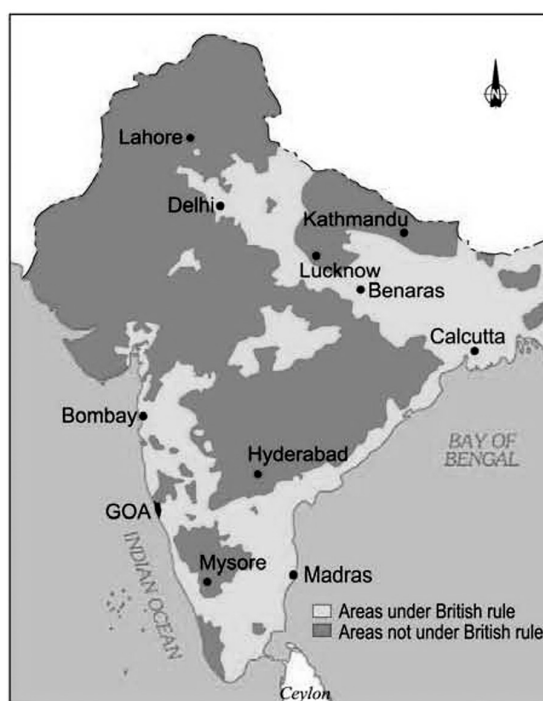
- ❖ This final wave of annexations in India occurred **under Lord Dalhousie**, who served as the Governor-General from 1848 to 1856, under this doctrine of lapse, if an Indian ruler died without a male heir, their kingdom would automatically become part of Company territory.



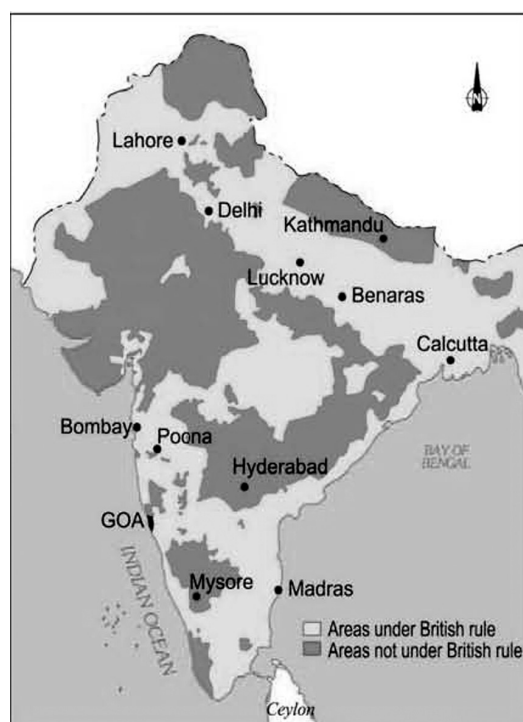
- ❖ Several kingdoms were annexed using this doctrine, including Satara in 1848, Sambalpur in 1850, Udaipur in 1852, Nagpur in 1853, and Jhansi in 1854, and Awadh in 1856.



**Figure 2.3(a):** India 1797



**Figure 2.3(b):** India 1840



**Figure 2.3(c):** India 1857

**Figure 2.3 (a,b,c):** Expansion of British territorial power in India (1757-1857)



## Setting up a New Administration

### ❖ Before Warren Hastings:

- ❖ The Company gained control not only in Bengal but also in Bombay and Madras, which were divided into administrative units called **Presidencies**, each ruled by a Governor, with the Governor-General serving as the supreme head of the administration.

### ❖ Administrative Reforms under Warren Hastings:

- ❖ In 1772, a new justice system was established, with each district having two courts: A criminal court (faujdari adalat) and a civil court (diwani adalat).
- ❖ Indian laws were interpreted by Maulvis and Hindu pandits for European district collectors who presided over civil courts; whereas the criminal courts were still under a qazi and a mufti but under the supervision of the collectors.
- ❖ To address the issue of different interpretations of local laws, eleven pandits were tasked with compiling a digest of Hindu laws in 1775. N.B. Halhed translated this digest into English.
- ❖ By 1778, a new code of Muslim laws was also compiled for the benefit of European judges.
- ❖ The Regulating Act of 1773 led to the establishment of a new Supreme Court, while a court of appeal called the Sadar Nizamat Adalat was set up in Calcutta.
- ❖ Collector responsible for collecting revenue and taxes and maintaining law and order with the help of judges, police officers, and Daroga and his office the Collectorate, became a new center of power and patronage that gradually replaced previous authorities.

## The Company Army:

- ❖ Though colonial rule in India introduced administrative and reform ideas, it relied mainly on the Mughal army consisting mainly of cavalry (sawars) and infantry (paidal soldiers) supplied by the local zamindars.
- ❖ As the Mughals relied heavily on cavalry, they did not feel the need to have a large professionally trained infantry.
- ❖ Mughal successor states like Awadh and Benaras in the 18th century started recruiting peasants and training them as professional soldiers, following similar steps the Company began recruiting for its own army, which came to be known as the **sepoy army** (from the Indian word “sipahi”, meaning soldier).
- ❖ The weakness of Company’s cavalry came forth in 1820s war with Burma, Afghanistan, and Egypt, where soldiers used muskets and matchlocks, making infantry regiments more vital.
- ❖ In the early nineteenth century, the British introduced a uniform military culture, subjecting soldiers to European-style training, drill, and discipline.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the transformation of the East India Company from a trading entity into a territorial colonial power was significantly accelerated by the introduction of steam technology in the early nineteenth century. This technological advancement drastically reduced the travel time to India, making it more accessible for British settlers. By 1857, the East India Company had expanded its control to approximately 63% of the territory and 78% of the population of the Indian subcontinent, effectively establishing dominance over the entire region through direct and indirect means. This marked a pivotal moment in the history of British colonialism in India, shaping the course of events for years to come.



## Glossary

- **Mercantile:** A business enterprise that makes profit primarily through trade, buying goods cheap and selling them at higher prices.
- **Farman:** A royal edict, a royal order.
- **Puppet:** Literally, a toy that you can move with strings. The term is used disapprovingly to refer to a person who is controlled by someone else.
- **Qazi:** A judge.
- **Mufti:** A jurist of the Muslim community responsible for expounding the law that the qazi would administer.
- **Impeachment:** A trial by the House of Lords in England for charges of misconduct brought against a person in the House of Commons.
- **Dharmashastras:** Sanskrit texts prescribing social rules and codes of behavior, composed from c. 500 BCE onwards.
- **Sawar:** Men on horses.
- **Musket:** A heavy gun used by infantry soldiers.
- **Matchlock:** An early type of gun in which the powder was ignited by a match.





# Colonialism and The Countryside

**Bibliography:** The chapter encompasses the summary of **Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III), and **Theme IX - XII NCERT** (Themes in Indian History-III ).

## Introduction

In the tapestry of India's colonial era, the rural landscapes and tribal communities emerge as potent narratives of transformation and resistance. These communities, rich in tradition and cultural ethos, were juxtaposed against the encompassing embrace of colonial impositions. Their journey during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries—from the nomadic lives of jhum cultivators to settled practices under British dictates and the comprehensive discussion on the various encounters of the countryside with colonialism is drawn from primary sources like revenue records and journals. We confront British-enforced forest laws, trader invasions, and the indomitable spirit of tribal resistance, epitomised by events like the Santhal uprising and figures like Birsa Munda. Moreover, the influence of the English East India Company reshaped rural dynamics, introduced economic disparities and redefined land ownership.

## Ruling the Countryside

### The Company Becomes the Diwan:

- ❖ **Event:** On 12 August 1765, the Mughal emperor appointed the East India Company as the Diwan of Bengal. (Refer to Figure 3.1)



**Figure 3.1: Robert Clive accepting the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from the Mughal ruler in 1765.**

- ❖ **Significance:** The event marked the Company's transition from trade to administration.
- ❖ **Depiction:** In British imagination, this was seen as a significant event, captured in majestic paintings, although the actual event was likely a more modest affair.



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## Revenue for the Company:

- ❖ **Role Transition:** As the Diwan, the Company had to oversee land administration and revenue organisation. Despite administrative responsibilities, the Company's primary aim remained trade.
- ❖ **Revenue Use:** Before 1765, the Company bought Indian goods using gold and silver imported from Britain. Post-1765, the Company utilised revenue from Bengal for this purpose. (Refer to Figure 3.2)

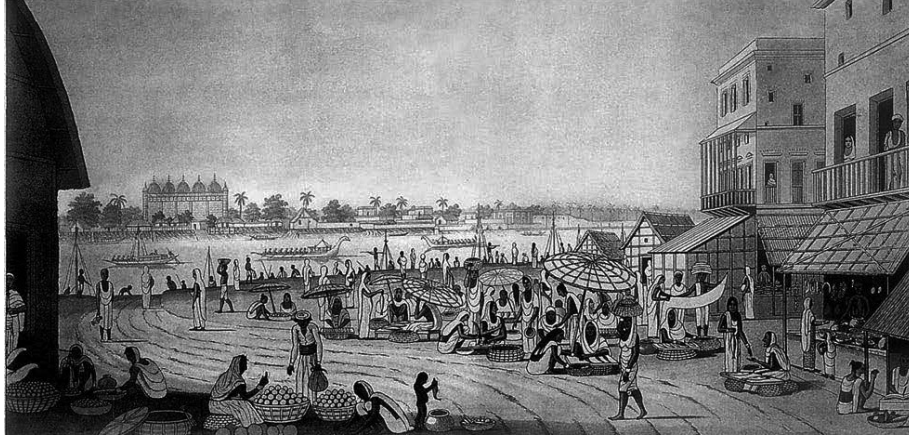


Figure 3.2: A weekly market in Murshidabad in Bengal

- ❖ **Economic Strain:** The forced buying system at low prices led artisans to desert villages, and peasants found it hard to meet high revenue demands. This affected both artisanal and agricultural sectors.
- ❖ **Great Bengal famine of 1770:** A devastating famine hit Bengal, killing about one-third of the population.

## The Need to Improve Agriculture:

- ❖ **Necessity:** The deteriorating economy and famine highlighted the need for improved agriculture.
- ❖ **Permanent Settlement (1793):**
  - ✧ **Cornwallis** was the Governor-General of Bengal when the Permanent Settlement was introduced. (Refer to Figure 3.3)
  - ✧ The revenue amount was fixed permanently and the Company recognized rajas and taluqdars as **zamindars**.
  - ✧ Zamindars were responsible for collecting rent from peasants and paying revenue to the Company.

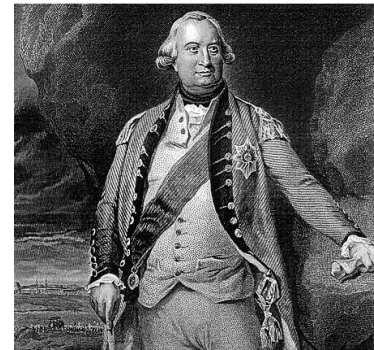


Figure 3.3: Charles Cornwallis

## The Problem:

- ❖ **Issues with Permanent Settlement:**
  - ✧ High revenue demands led many zamindars to lose their lands.
  - ✧ Even with market price increases in the 19th century, the Company couldn't benefit due to fixed revenue demands.
  - ✧ While zamindars had higher incomes, there was no incentive to improve the land.
- ❖ **Peasant Plight:** High rents, insecure rights, and dependence on moneylenders made life difficult for peasants.

## New Systems Devised:

### ❖ Mahalwari Settlement (1822):

- ❖ **Area:** It was primarily introduced in the North Western Provinces of the Bengal Presidency.
- ❖ **Concept:** Introduced by **Holt Mackenzie**, this system prioritised village-level revenue collection. The revenue collection responsibility shifted from zamindars to village headmen.

### ❖ The Munro System:

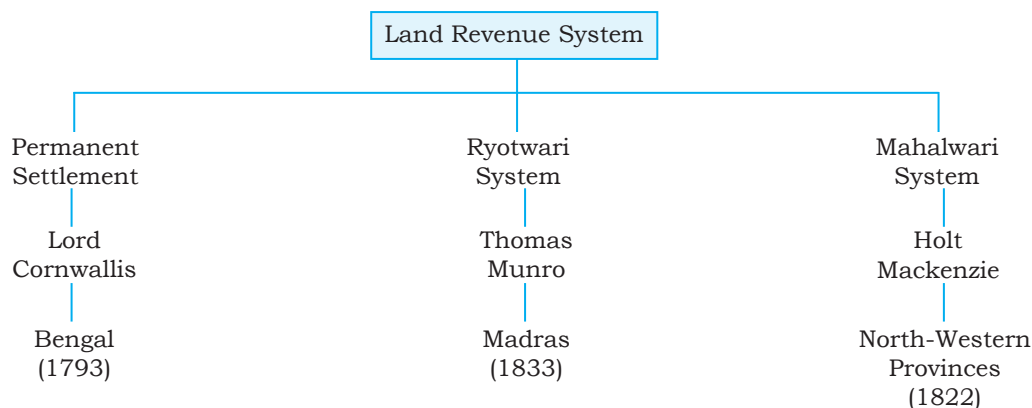
- ❖ The Ryotwari System in the South was introduced by **Captain Read** and expanded by **Thomas Munro**, focusing on direct settlements with ryots or cultivators. (Refer to Figure 3.4)

### ❖ Ryotwar (Ryotwari) System:

- ❖ It was implemented in the British territories in the South. Under this system, settlements were made directly with ryots (cultivators). The British were envisioned as protectors or **“paternal father figures”** for the ryots.



**Figure 3.4: Thomas Munro, Governor of Madras (1819-26)**



### ❖ Challenges with New Systems:

Both the mahalwari and ryotwari systems faced issues, few of which are listed as under:

- ❖ High revenue demands led to peasants leaving their lands.
- ❖ The vision of converting peasants into thriving farmers wasn't achieved.
- ❖ The newly implemented systems couldn't ensure the well-being of the peasants nor meet the Company's revenue aspirations.

### POINTS TO PONDER

We saw different ways of revenue collection like Permanent settlement, Mahalwari and Ryotwari. All of these ensured a systematic revenue collection. But, what do you think was the motive for such introduction? A good, recorded and efficient administration or laying the foundation of colonialism or to create a class of Zamindars supportive to the British?



## Crops for Europe

- ❖ The British understood that India's countryside could serve dual purposes: yield revenue and grow the crops that Europe needed.
- ❖ By the late eighteenth century, the focus was on expanding the cultivation of specific crops like opium, indigo, and more.
- ❖ They used various methods to promote the cultivation of crops such as jute, tea, sugarcane, wheat, cotton, and rice in diverse Indian regions.



## Does Colour have a History?

- ❖ **Origin of Indigo:** This blue dye was derived from the indigo plant. 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britain used the dye manufactured from Indian indigo plants, as India was the world's largest indigo supplier then.
- ❖ **Comparison:** Figure 3.5 displays a kalamkari print from Andhra Pradesh, India, while Figure 3.6 shows a cotton print from nineteenth-century Britain. Both utilise the vibrant blue indigo colour.



Figure 3.5: A kalamkari print, twentieth-century India



Figure 3.6: A Morris cotton print, late-nineteenth-century England

## Reasons for the Demand for Indian Indigo:

- ❖ **Historical Usage:** By the thirteenth century, manufacturers in Italy, France, and Britain used Indian indigo for dyeing. Limited quantities reached Europe, making it expensive.
- ❖ **Woad vs. Indigo:** Due to indigo's scarcity and higher cost, European manufacturers initially used another plant called woad. Indigo, however, was preferred for its richer hue, leading to its higher demand by the seventeenth century.
- ❖ **Global Cultivation of Indigo:** With relaxed indigo import bans, countries like France, Portugal, England, and Spain began cultivating indigo in their respective colonies.
- ❖ **St. Domingue Crisis:** In the eighteenth century, French planters produced indigo and sugar in St. Domingue in the Caribbean.
  - ✧ The African slaves working there rebelled in 1791, devastating plantations and killing planters. (Refer to Figure 3.7)
  - ✧ By 1792, France abolished slavery in its colonies, resulting in the collapse of the Caribbean indigo plantations.



Figure 3.7: The Slave Revolt in St. Domingue, August 1791, painting by January Suchodolski

## Britain Turns to India:

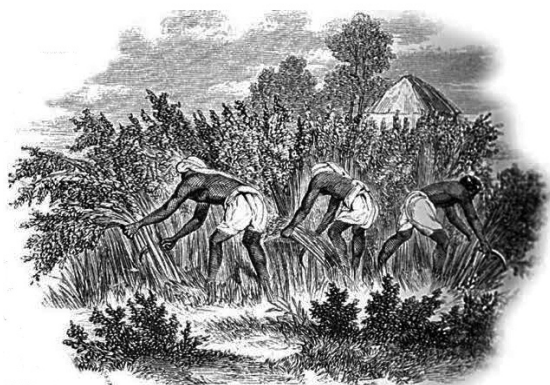
- ❖ **Increased Demand and Limited Supply:** As existing indigo sources from the West Indies and America dwindled, the fast industrialising Britain saw a surge in cotton production, consequently increasing indigo demand.



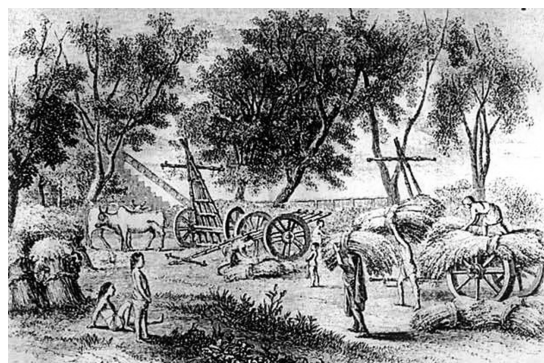
- ❖ **India as the Solution:** To meet rising European demand, the British East India Company expanded indigo cultivation in India. By 1810, 95% of indigo imported by Britain was sourced from India.

### Profitable Indigo Production in India:

- ❖ **Stakeholders:** Company officials and commercial agents invested in indigo production. Many even left their jobs to focus on indigo business (Refer to Figure 3.8 and 3.9).
  - ✧ The prospect of profits drew numerous Scotsmen and Englishmen to India as planters. They could also avail loans for indigo production from emerging banks and the Company.



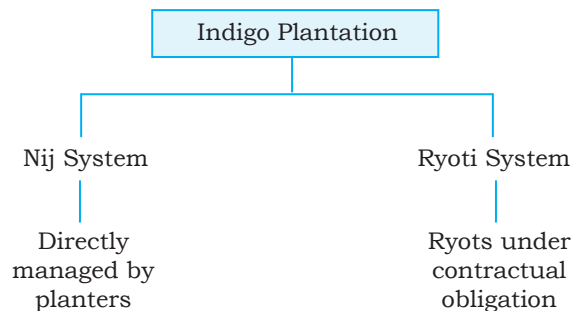
**Figure 3.8: Workers harvesting indigo in early-nineteenth-century Bengal. From Colesworthy Grant, Rural Life in Bengal, 1860**



**Figure 3.9: The Indigo plant being brought from the fields to the factory**

### How was Indigo cultivated?

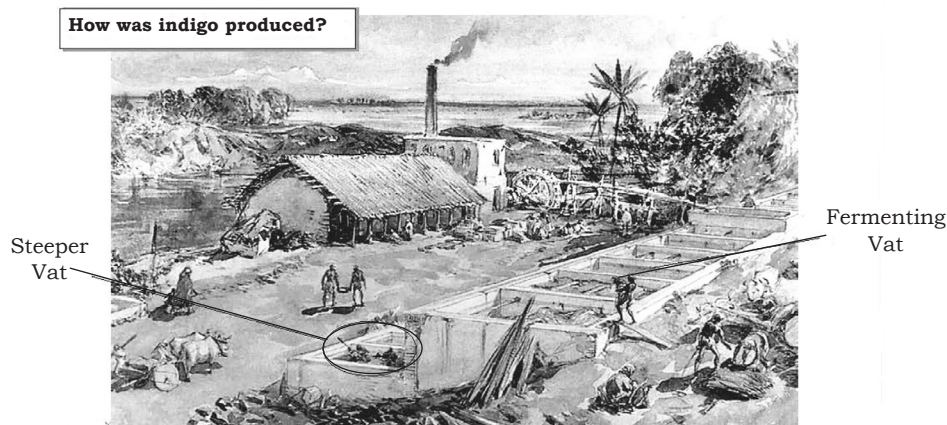
- ❖ **Nij System:** In this system, planters directly managed the land, either purchased or rented.
  - ✧ **Challenges:**
    - ❑ Difficulties in expanding due to land constraints.
    - ❑ Mobilising labour clashed with rice cultivation periods.
    - ❑ Large-scale Nij cultivation required significant investment in ploughs and bullocks.
- ❖ **Ryoti System:**
  - ✧ **Contractual Obligations:**
    - ❑ Ryots, under contractual agreements, received cash advances to cultivate indigo.
    - ❑ They were obligated to dedicate 25% of their land to indigo cultivation.
  - ✧ **Challenges:**
    - ❑ The debt cycle was perpetual, with low returns on indigo.
    - ❑ Fertile lands, ideal for rice, were often dedicated to indigo.
    - ❑ Indigo's exhaustive nature left the soil unfit for subsequent rice cultivation.



## Indigo Production Process:

### ❖ Setting and Process:

- ❖ **Location:** The villages cultivating indigo were typically situated near the indigo factories owned by planters (Refer to Figure 3.10).



**Figure 3.10: An indigo factory located near indigo fields, painting by William Simpson, 1863**

- ❖ **Harvest to Factory:** Post-harvest, the indigo plant was transported to the vats present in the indigo factory. The manufacturing process required three or four vats, each with a distinctive purpose (Refer to Figure 3.11).



**Figure 3.11: Women usually carried the indigo plant to the vats.**

### ❖ Step-by-Step Process:

#### ❑ Fermenting or Steeper Vat:

- ❖ Here, leaves from the indigo plant were soaked in warm water.
- ❖ After several hours, as fermentation set in, the liquid started to boil and produce bubbles. Following this, the decomposed leaves were removed.
- ❖ The resulting liquid was then drained into a vat positioned beneath the first one.

- ❑ **Beater Vat** (Refer to Figure 3.12):
  - ✦ In this vat, the liquid solution was consistently stirred and agitated with paddles.
  - ✦ The colour transformation was from green to blue during this stage.
  - ✦ Lime water was subsequently added to the mixture.
  - ✦ As a result, indigo separated in flake form. The clear liquid stayed on top while a muddy sediment (indigo pulp) settled at the vat bottom.
- ❑ **Settling Vat:**
  - ✦ The clear liquid was syphoned off.
  - ✦ The sediment, which is the indigo pulp, was moved to this vat.
  - ✦ Afterwards, it was pressed and dried, prepping it for sale (Refer to figure 3.13).



Figure 3.12: The Beater Vat



Figure 3.13: The Indigo is ready for sale

## The “Blue Rebellion” and Its Aftermath

### The Rebellion:

- ❖ **Start:** In March 1859, ryots in Bengal rebelled against growing indigo.
- ❖ **Nature of Protest:** The uprising saw:
  - ✦ Ryots refusing to pay rent to planters.
  - ✦ Attacks on indigo factories with traditional weapons.
  - ✦ Women participating with household utensils.
  - ✦ Social boycott of those who supported planters.
  - ✦ Resistance against the **gomasthas and lathiyals**.

### Reasons for the Rebellion:

- ❖ **Oppression:** The system of indigo cultivation was extremely oppressive.
- ❖ **Local Support:** Zamindars disliked the growing influence of the planters and their forceful acquisition of land on long leases. So, many local zamindars and village headmen supported the ryots.
- ❖ **Perceived Government Support:** Post 1857 revolt, the British government feared another uprising. The Lieutenant Governor’s tour and the magistrate’s notice in Barasat were misconstrued as signs of government sympathy.



- ❖ **Intellectual Intervention:** Intellectuals from Calcutta highlighted the plight of ryots and condemned the tyrannical indigo system.

### Government Response:

- ❖ **Military Involvement:** The military was deployed to safeguard planters.
- ❖ **Indigo Commission:**
  - ✧ Established to investigate the indigo system.
  - ✧ Found planters guilty of using coercion.
  - ✧ Acknowledged the unprofitability of indigo cultivation for ryots.
  - ✧ Advised ryots they could refuse indigo cultivation in the future.

### Aftermath:

- ❖ **Immediate Impact:** Indigo production in Bengal plummeted post-rebellion.
- ❖ **Shift in Production:** Planters moved their operations to Bihar.
- ❖ **Synthetic Dyes:** The discovery of synthetic dyes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century impacted the indigo business.
- ❖ **Champaran Movement:** Mahatma Gandhi's 1917 visit to Champaran initiated a movement against the indigo planters in Bihar.

## The Hoe and the Plough: Impact of Peasant Economy Expansion in the Rajmahal Hills

### In the Hills of Rajmahal: Buchanan's Observations:

- ✧ Travelling through the Rajmahal hills in the early 19th century, Francis Buchanan observed the region's inaccessibility and noted the hostility of the inhabitants.
- ✧ The **Paharias**, as identified by later revenue records, were forest-dependent, practising shifting agriculture. They relied on the forest's bounty, shifting lands for cultivation and ensuring sustainability.

#### Who was Buchanan?

Buchanan served in the Bengal Medical Service between 1794-1815. Not just a physician, he was also a surveyor and later inherited the name Hamilton, becoming Buchanan-Hamilton.

- ❖ **William Hodges and his Perception (Refer to 3.14 and 3.15):** British artist Hodges ventured into Rajmahal seeking picturesque landscapes reflecting Romantic ideals. Contrary to colonial views, he painted the region as serene and idyllic.
- ❖ **Life of the Paharias:**
  - ✧ Deeply connected to the forest for sustenance, the Paharias' way of life comprised hunting, food gathering, charcoal production, and silkworm rearing.
  - ✧ Residing amid tamarind groves and mango trees, the region symbolised their identity and heritage.
  - ✧ **Paharia chiefs** held pivotal roles, including mediating disputes, defending territory, and negotiating with external powers.
  - ✧ Survival-driven raids on plains became a hallmark of their interactions with settled communities. Paharia chiefs, acting as gatekeepers, extracted tributes and tolls, ensuring a tenuous peace.





**Figure 3.14: A view of a hill village in Rajmahal, painted by William Hodges, 1782**

❖ **Conflict and Confrontation:**

- ❖ With the British promoting deforestation and settled agriculture, the Paharias found themselves in escalating conflict with settlers.
- ❖ The British vision of civilization clashed with the Paharias' forest-centric way of life, leading to policies that ranged from brutal to pacifying.
- ❖ Encounters with colonial officials, coupled with memories of repression, made the Paharias wary, as evident during Buchanan's travels in 1810-11.



**Figure 3.15: A view of Jangal territory, painted by William Hodges**

❖ **Emergence of the Santhals:**

- ❖ The Santhals, embodying the new wave of settlers, embarked on clearing forests and practising settled agriculture.
- ❖ The growing influence of the Santhals pushed the Paharias deeper into the Rajmahal hills.
- ❖ **A Symbolic Representation Emerged:** While Paharias were identified with their hoe and shifting cultivation, the new settlers, i.e., Santhals were identified with their plough and settled agriculture.

**The Santhals: Pioneer Settlers**

❖ **Buchanan's Observations:**

- ❖ In 1810, **Buchanan** journeyed through **Ganjuria Pahar, part of the Rajmahal ranges**, discovering an old village with recently cultivated surrounding lands.

- ✧ The transformed landscape, with its rocky yet fertile soil, bore witness to human labour's potential. This region was highlighted by Buchanan as a possible haven of riches and beauty.
- ✧ The shift towards cultivated lands was credited to the Santhals, who had cleared forests and settled there, displacing the hill's earlier inhabitants (Refer to Figure 3.16).



Figure 3.16: Hill village in Santhal country

#### ❖ Santhals in Bengal:

- ✧ Santhals began migrating to Bengal around the 1780s. They were sought after by zamindars to reclaim and cultivate lands. Additionally, the British officials beckoned them to settle in the Jangal Mahals.
- ✧ Faced with the Paharias' resistance to adopting settled agriculture and their refusal to cut forests, the British turned to the Santhals. (Refer to Figure 3.17)



Figure 3.17: Sidhu Manjhi, the leader of the Santhal rebellion

#### ❖ Settlement in Rajmahal:

- ✧ The Santhals were provided lands in the Rajmahal foothills, encouraging them to adopt settled agriculture.
- ✧ By **1832**, a large expanse, known as **Damin-i-Koh**, was designated as **Santhal territory**. Bound by pillars, this region was separated from both the settled plains and the Paharias' domain.
- ✧ Santhal settlements surged post this demarcation. Their population ballooned from 3,000 in 1838 to over 82,000 in 1851, with a corresponding rise in villages.

#### ❖ Santhal Heritage:

- ✧ 19<sup>th</sup> century Santhal myths and songs frequently alluded to their nomadic past, marked by ceaseless movement in search of a homeland. In Damin-i-Koh, this search seemed to have culminated.

#### ❖ Consequences of Santhal Settlement:

- ✧ The Santhals' arrival led the Paharias to retreat further into the Rajmahal hills. With the fertile terrains now out of bounds, the Paharias found it challenging to sustain their agricultural and hunting practices.
- ✧ Conversely, Santhals transitioned from nomadism to settled agriculture, growing market-oriented crops and dealing with traders and moneylenders.

❖ **Land Struggles and Rebellion (Refer to Figure 3.18 and 3.19):**

- ❖ Over time, the land that the Santhals had cultivated became subject of contention. The colonial state imposed hefty taxes, while moneylenders and zamindars gradually exerted control.
- ❖ By the **1850s**, disillusionment set in, leading to the **Santhal Revolt (1855-56)**. Post the rebellion, the Santhal Pargana was established, carved out from Bhagalpur and Birbhum districts.
- ❖ The British hoped that by demarcating this new territory with specific laws, they could pacify the Santhals.



**Figure 3.18: Santhals fight the sepoys of the British Raj, Illustrated London News, 23 February 1856**



**Figure 3.19: Burning of Santhal villages, illustrated London News, 23 February 1856**

❖ **Colonial Perception of Santhals Post-Rebellion (Refer to Figure 3.20):**

- ❖ The Santhal rebellion altered British views. Villages previously seen as peaceful became symbols of violence.
- ❖ Following the revolt's suppression, punitive measures ensued, with villages burned, suspects apprehended, and portrayals of British dominance showcased in England.
- ❖ Depictions, such as the one of British officials triumphantly atop an elephant, were symbolic representations which aimed to convey political messages.



**Figure 3.20: Santhal prisoners being taken away, Illustrated London News, 1856**

## A Revolt in the Countryside: The Bombay Deccan

### Background:

- ❖ Historians investigate changes in the Bombay Deccan countryside through the lens of a significant peasant revolt.

- ❖ These upheavals offer rich insights into the life, grievances, and broader context of the time.
- ❖ Additionally, revolts create records, as state authorities investigate causes to restore order, offering invaluable sources for historians.

### Peasant Revolt of 1875:

- ❖ A notable revolt took place in 1875. It originated in Supa, Poona, where peasants, or ryots, demanded and destroyed the account books (bahi khata) and debt bonds held by shopkeepers and moneylenders.
- ❖ This revolt expanded to over 30 villages. The consistent pattern involved attacking sahu-kars (moneylenders), burning account books and bonds.
- ❖ Given its magnitude, authorities related this uprising to the pivotal 1857 revolt, which led to significant repressive measures such as a high number of arrests and military deployments were made.

### Historical Context:

- ❖ As the British expanded their rule in India, they initiated new revenue systems. While the Permanent Settlement system of Bengal wasn't universally applied, due to its inherent limitations in revenue increase, new territories annexed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century received temporary revenue settlements.
- ❖ **Ryotwari Settlement:** Influenced by economist David Ricardo, British officials sought to optimise these new systems. In the Bombay Deccan, the **ryotwari settlement** was introduced.
  - ❖ This system directly settled revenue with the ryot **based on soil productivity**, with a **periodic reassessment every 30 years**.

### Impact of the New Revenue System:

- ❖ The ryotwari system's revenue demand was so excessive that many peasants deserted their villages.
- ❖ This impact was most profound in areas with poor soil and erratic rainfall. Aggressive revenue extraction techniques by officials further exacerbated peasant distress.
- ❖ A drastic reduction in agricultural product prices during the 1830s, coupled with the 1832-34 famine, deepened the crisis. Faced with dwindling resources and heightened demands, peasants increasingly turned to moneylenders, which began a problematic cycle of debt.

### Increasing Indebtedness:

- ❖ By the 1840s, the extent of peasant indebtedness was alarmingly high.
- ❖ Recognizing the shortcomings of the 1820s' revenue demands, officials moderated them by the mid-1840s. Post-1845, as agricultural prices began to recover, peasants aimed to expand cultivation.
- ❖ However, even with an intention to expand, their financial needs, be it for essential commodities, agricultural tools, or land, further bound them to moneylenders.

### The Cotton Boom (1860s):

- ❖ **Dependence on American Cotton:** Prior to the 1860s, 75% of Britain's raw cotton imports came from America, which led to concerns about over-reliance. (Refer to Figure 3.21)

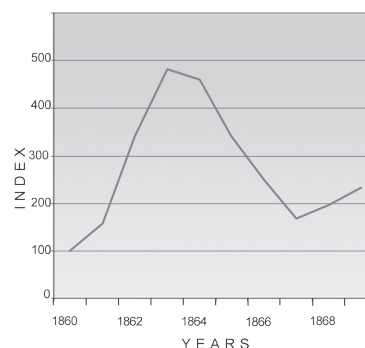


Figure 3.21: The Cotton Boom



- ❖ **Alternative Sources:** The Cotton Supply Association (1857) and the Manchester Cotton Company (1859) aimed to diversify sources. India, with its suitable environment and cheap labour, was identified as a key potential supplier.
- ❖ **Impact of the American Civil War:** The war drastically reduced American cotton exports to Britain. This led to increased British reliance on Indian cotton, with merchants in Bombay advancing credits to encourage cotton production.
- ❖ **Booming Indian Cotton Production:** From 1860 to 1864, cotton cultivation in the Bombay Deccan region doubled. By 1862, India provided over 90% of Britain's cotton imports. (Refer to Figure 3.22 and 3.23)

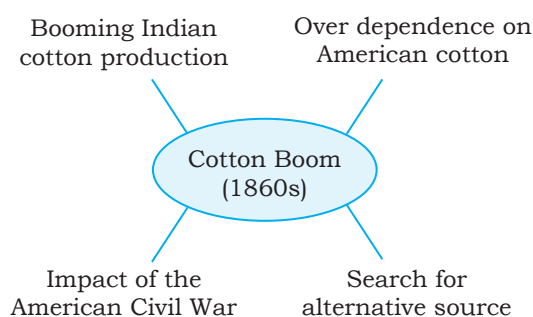


Figure 3.22: Carts transporting cotton halting under a banyan tree



Figure 3.23: Transporting cotton before the railway era, Illustrated London News, 20 April 1861

- ❖ **Varied Impact on Producers (Refer to Figure 3.24 and 3.25):** While some profited, many peasants found themselves in deeper debt due to rapid cotton expansion.



Figure 3.24: Cotton bales lying at the Bombay terminus of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway ready for shipment to England, Illustrated London News, 23 August 1862



Figure 3.25: A fleet of boats carrying cotton bales down the Ganges from Mirzapur, Illustrated London News, 13 December 1862

### Credit Dried Up:

- ❖ **End of the American Civil War:** The war's end in 1865 saw the revival of the American cotton industry, leading to a decline in Indian cotton exports and prices.
- ❖ **Retreat of Credit:** Recognizing the declining demand, merchants and sahuks in Maharashtra became wary of offering long-term credits and began demanding repayments.
- ❖ **Rising Revenue Demand:** The British colonial administration dramatically increased revenue demands, complicating the situation for ryots, who were already grappling with falling cotton prices.

## The Experience of Injustice:

- ❖ **Tensions with Moneylenders:** Ryots grew frustrated with moneylenders who, after initially offering easy credit, began refusing loans, violating long-standing customary norms.
- ❖ **Erosion of Customary Norms:** Pre-colonial norms, such as capping interest at the principal amount, were disregarded, with some moneylenders charging excessive interest.
- ❖ **Manipulation of the Limitation Law:** The 1859 law, intended to prevent indefinite interest accumulation, was twisted by moneylenders, who forced ryots to renew their bonds every three years.
- ❖ **Distrust of Bonds and Deeds:** The British emphasis on formal documentation was alien to the ryots, who became wary of the written word, fearing deceit by moneylenders.
- ❖ **Testimonies to the Deccan Riots Commission:** Numerous ryot petitions documented injustices, exorbitant interest rates, and exploitative practices by moneylenders. They also highlighted issues like refusal of loan receipts, fictitious account entries, and unwarranted acquisition of peasants' properties.

## The Deccan Riots Commission

### Background and Setting Up of the Commission:

- ❖ Despite the escalating revolt in the Deccan, the Bombay Government initially downplayed its significance.
- ❖ However, the broader Indian Government, haunted by the events of 1857, pushed for a thorough investigation.
- ❖ This led to the establishment of a commission of enquiry, the findings of which were eventually submitted to the British Parliament in 1878 as the **"Deccan Riots Report"**.

### Rich Source of Historical Data:

- ❖ The Deccan Riots Report is invaluable to historians. It offers a multifaceted view of the period, derived from extensive enquiries across riot-affected districts.
- ❖ It encompasses testimonies from ryots, sahuikars, and eyewitnesses.
- ❖ It has compiled data on revenue rates, market prices, and interest rates across different regions.
- ❖ The Report also covers comprehensive reports from district collectors.

### Official Bias and Interpretation:

- ❖ When analysing such documents, it is pivotal to recognize nature and inherent biases of the officials.
- ❖ The commission was explicitly tasked to evaluate whether government-imposed revenue demands were the root cause of the revolt. Post-investigation, they absolved the government, placing blame squarely on moneylenders.
- ❖ This narrative was recurrent in colonial records, underscoring a consistent hesitancy by the colonial regime to accept any blame for popular uprisings or dissatisfaction.
- ❖ **The Imperative of Cross-Referencing:**
  - ❖ While official reports, like the Deccan Riots Report, are essential for piecing together historical events, they must be approached critically.

- ✧ Historians should corroborate these reports with diverse sources, such as newspapers, unofficial accounts, legal documents, and when feasible, oral testimonies to paint a more balanced and comprehensive picture of events.

## The Life of Tribal Groups

### Jhum Cultivators:

- ❖ They practised shifting cultivation, primarily in forests which involved cutting treetops, burning vegetation, and using ash as fertiliser. **(Refer to Figure 3.26 and 3.27)**
- ❖ They moved to new fields after harvesting a crop and free movement in forests was crucial for their survival.



**Figure 3.26: Women of the Dongria Kandha tribe in Orissa wade through the river on the way to the market**



**Figure 3.27: Dognria Kandha women in Orissa take home pandanus leaves from the forest to make plates**

### Hunters and Gatherers:

- ❖ This group depended on hunting and gathering forest produce for survival.
- ❖ **The Khonds:** Khonds lived in Orissa forests, they hunted collectively, and depended heavily on forest resources. Bought or exchanged goods when forest resources were insufficient; some took up labour jobs.
- ❖ **Baigas** of central India were reluctant labourers, preferring to rely on the forest.
- ❖ Many tribals fell into debt due to high-interest loans from moneylenders.

### Herders:

- ❖ These were pastoral tribal groups which moved with cattle, sheep, or goats seasonally. Van Gujjars, Labadis, Gaddis, and Bakarwals are examples.

### Settled Cultivators:

- ❖ Some tribal communities began settled cultivation and started using ploughs and established rights over lands **(Refer to Figure 3.28)**.
- ❖ As the land often belonged to clans; power hierarchies emerged within clans.
- ❖ Settled tribal groups like **Gonds and Santhals** were considered more **civilised** than others by the British.



Figure 3.28: Location of some tribal groups in India

A time to hunt, a time to sow, a time to move to a new field (Refer to Figure 3.29):

- **Work and Time Perception:** Different societies had varying notions of work and time.
- **Baigas and Khonds' Schedule (as described by Verrier Elwin):**
  - **Chait:** Women cleared stalks; men hunted using bamboo traps. Women also gathered fruits.
  - **Baisakh:** Forest firing occurred; men hunted near villages.
  - **Jeth:** Sowing was done alongside hunting.
  - **From Asadh to Bhadon:** Men worked in fields.
  - **Kuar and Kartik:** Beans and kutki crops ripened.
  - **Aghan:** All crops were ready.
  - **Pus:** Time for dances, marriages, and winnowing.
  - **Magh:** Movement to new bewars; main activity was hunting-gathering.



Figure 3.29: A Santhal girl carrying firewood, Bihar, 1946

## Impact of Colonial Rule on Tribal Lives

### On Tribal Chiefs:

- ❖ Before the British colonisation, tribal chiefs held pivotal roles in their communities, possessing economic and administrative power.
- ❖ With the advent of British rule, although these chiefs retained some land rights, their administrative influence waned. (Refer to Figure 3.30)
- ❖ They were subjected to British officials, obligated to pay tributes, and had lost their traditional stature and sway within their tribes.



Figure 3.30: A log house being built in a village of the Nyishi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh



### On Shifting Cultivators:

- ❖ The British favoured a sedentary cultivation system for easier administration and consistent revenue generation.
- ❖ They executed land settlements to categorise and levy taxes on the land. Yet, their endeavours to transform **jhum (shifting) cultivators** into settled farmers were largely ineffective. (Refer to figure 3.31 and 3.32)



**Figure 3.31: Bhil women cultivating in a forest in Gujarat**



**Figure 3.32: Tribal workers in a rice field in Andhra Pradesh**

- ❖ These cultivators faced challenges in fixed cultivation, and due to protests, the British eventually permitted some jhum cultivation in certain forest regions.

### Forest Laws and their Impact:

- ❖ British colonial rule declared forests as state assets, thereby limiting tribal freedoms and traditional rights within them.
- ❖ This curtailment significantly impacted the tribal lifestyle, forcing many to seek new homes and livelihoods. However, the British, needing labour for forest tasks, allocated minor forest tracts to tribes.
- ❖ This came with conditions that tribes were to provide labour and aid in forest upkeep. These changes faced substantial resistance from tribes, leading to notable revolts and demonstrations.

### The Problem with Trade (Refer to Figure 3.33 and 3.34):

- ❖ The intrusion of traders and money-lenders into tribal territories had profound economic repercussions for the tribes.



**Figure 3.33: Godara women weaving**



**Figure 3.34: Hajang woman weaving a mat**

- ❖ A salient example is the **silk trade**. Although in high demand in European markets, tribal silk growers received a pittance from middlemen who reaped enormous profits.
- ❖ These tribal producers were undercompensated for their **cocoons**, which were resold at elevated prices, leading many tribes to view traders and the emerging market system with deep scepticism.

### The Search for Work (Refer to Figure 3.35):

- ❖ The colonial period saw a surge in industries like tea plantations and mining. Tribals, lured by job prospects, often confronted exploitation.
- ❖ They were poorly compensated and frequently denied their rights, like returning to their ancestral homes.
- ❖ Overall, the British colonial rule brought out significant disruptions in the tribal way of life, altering their economic, social, and cultural fabric. They grappled with changing land and forest legislations, exploitation in trade, and challenges in seeking just employment opportunities.



**Figure 3.35: Coal miners of Bihar, 1948**

### Tribal Lamentations under British Rule

In the 1930s, Verrier Elwin journeyed to the land of the **Baigas, a tribal community in central India**, documenting their customs, traditions, and art forms. He recorded several songs which depicted the tribe's hardships under British rule. One such poignant song conveys:

"In this land of the English how hard it is to live...

To pay cattle tax we have to sell cow,

To pay forest tax we have to sell buffalo,

To pay land tax we have to sell bullock,

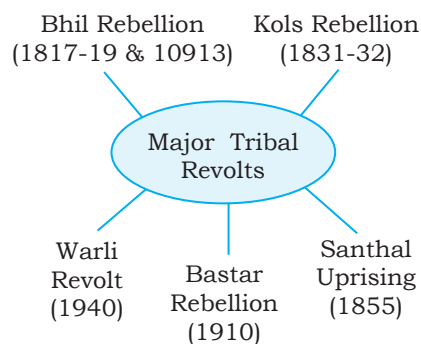
How are we to get our food? In this land of the English."

### Tribal Rebellions in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

- ❖ **Overview:** Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, tribal groups resisted changes in laws, faced exploitations by traders and moneylenders, and faced new taxes.
- ❖ **Major Revolts:**
  - ✧ **Kols Rebellion (1831-32):** The Kols, a tribal community, staged a significant rebellion in 1831-32 against external intrusions and oppressions.
  - ✧ **Santhal Uprising (1855):** In 1855, the Santhals, one of the largest tribal communities in India, rose in revolt against the exploitation by moneylenders and landlords.
  - ✧ **Bastar Rebellion (1910):** The tribal communities of Bastar region came forward in 1910 to protest against British policies and interventions in their homeland.
  - ✧ **Warli Revolt (1940):** The Warli community in Maharashtra initiated a revolt in 1940, challenging the ongoing land injustice and exploitation by landlords.

### POINTS TO PONDER

The tribal rebellions across the country were for the injustice and oppressive British policies. Can you think of any other reasons? And what may be the reasons that most tribal responses were violent in nature?



## Birsa Munda: A Beacon of Tribal Resistance

### ❖ Early Life:

- ❖ **Birsa** was born in the mid-1870s. The challenging economic circumstances of his family led them to migrate frequently.
- ❖ Growing up, tales of previous Munda uprisings and the call for revolt against the dikus influenced him.

### ❖ Education and Influences:

- ❖ **Missionary Schooling:** Birsa attended a missionary school, learning about Christianity.
- ❖ **Vaishnav Preaching:** He also spent time with a Vaishnav preacher, adopting specific Hindu customs and rituals.

### ❖ Birsa's Vision and Movement:

- ❖ **Reformation Goals:** Birsa sought to reform tribal society. He emphasised giving up alcohol, the importance of cleanliness, and urged Mundas to abandon witchcraft beliefs.
- ❖ **Opposition to Outsiders:** Despite his reformist approach, Birsa criticised external entities such as missionaries and Hindu landlords. He viewed them as threats to the Munda way of life.

### ❖ Revolt and Its Implications:

- ❖ **Call to Action:** In 1895, Birsa inspired his community to reclaim their past, highlighting a golden age, the *satyug*.
- ❖ **British Concerns:** The colonial government grew wary of Birsa's movement due to its political implications. He envisioned the ousting of all oppressive forces and the establishment of a Munda Raj.
- ❖ **Arrest and Mobilisation:** The British arrested Birsa in 1895. However, post his release in 1897, he galvanised his followers, urging them to overthrow oppressive symbols.

### ❖ Legacy and Impact:

- ❖ **Demise:** Birsa passed away in 1900 from cholera, leading to the movement's decline.
- ❖ **Significance:** His efforts had lasting impacts. They compelled the British to introduce protective laws for tribal lands. Moreover, his movement underscored the tribal communities' resilience and capability to challenge and resist colonial rule.

## Bengal and the Zamindars

Bengal was the first province to experience colonial rule, ushering in alterations to rural society, land rights, and a new revenue system.

### An Auction in Burdwan:

- ❖ The year 1797 witnessed a prominent auction in Burdwan, following the introduction of the **Permanent Settlement** in 1793.
- ❖ The Company designated a fixed revenue amount for each zamindar. Failure to pay led to the auctioning of their estates.
- ❖ During this auction, several mahals (estates) belonging to the Raja of Burdwan were on the block.



**Figure 3.36: Burdwan raja's City Palace on Diamond Harbour Road, Calcutta**

- ❖ Interestingly, over 95% of the auction sales were fictitious, with the Raja's own agents and servants reclaiming the lands.
- ❖ By the late nineteenth century, many rich zamindars of Bengal had city palaces with ballrooms, large grounds, entrance porches supported by **Corinthian** columns like these. (Refer to Figure 3.36).

### The Problem of Unpaid Revenue:

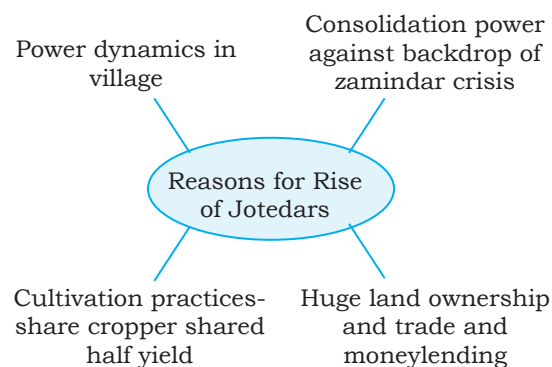
- ❖ The ripple effect of the Permanent Settlement meant that beyond Burdwan, over 75% of the zamindars were auctioned.
- ❖ **Charles Cornwallis**, (Refer to Figure 3.37) best known as the commander of the British forces during the **American War of Independence**, also played a pivotal role in the administrative landscape of India. As the Governor General of Bengal, he introduced the **Permanent Settlement** in 1793.
- ❖ The Permanent Settlement aimed to provide consistent revenue for the Company, and in doing so, boost agricultural investments.
- ❖ Zamindars, reclassified from their original status as rajas and taluqdars, were tasked with meeting this fixed revenue obligation.
- ❖ They functioned primarily as revenue collectors for the state, encompassing multiple villages.
- ❖ These zamindars would collect rent, remit the Company's portion, and keep the remainder.



**Figure 3.37: Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805), painted by Thomas Gainsborough, 1785**

### Reasons for Defaulted Payments by Zamindars:

- ❖ Despite the Company's expectations, zamindars often faltered in meeting the stipulated revenue demands.
- ❖ **Reasons for this included:**
  - ❖ The high initial revenue demands set by the Company.
  - ❖ The 1790s economic slump that affected agricultural commodity prices, complicating ryots' ability to settle their dues.
  - ❖ The strict nature of the revenue payment deadline, as emphasised by the **Sunset Law**.
  - ❖ Limitations imposed on zamindars in terms of rent collection and estate governance.
- ❖ The Company not only wanted to recognize but also curtail the power of zamindars, stripping them of traditional prerogatives.
- ❖ Rent collection emerged as a perennial issue, influenced by varying factors such as fluctuating harvest yields, market rates, and resistance from affluent ryots and village leaders.
- ❖ Legal channels for addressing these defaults were tedious, resulting in a multitude of unresolved cases.





## The Rise of the Jotedars:

- ❖ **Emergence in Villages:** In the backdrop of the **eighteenth-century zamindar** crisis, jotedars, or rich peasants, began consolidating power in villages. The Dinajpur district in North Bengal became a notable hotspot for this class.
  - ✧ Jotedars and moneylenders in rural Bengal often resided in opulent houses, as depicted in some of Chinnery's works (**Refer to Figure 3.38**).
- ❖ **Land Ownership and Influence:** By the **nineteenth century**, jotedars controlled vast tracts, sometimes thousands of acres. They dominated not only agriculture but also local trade and moneylending.
- ❖ **Cultivation Practices:** Most of their land was tilled by sharecroppers, known as adhiyars or bargadars. Sharecroppers provided their labour and tools and shared half the yield with jotedars.

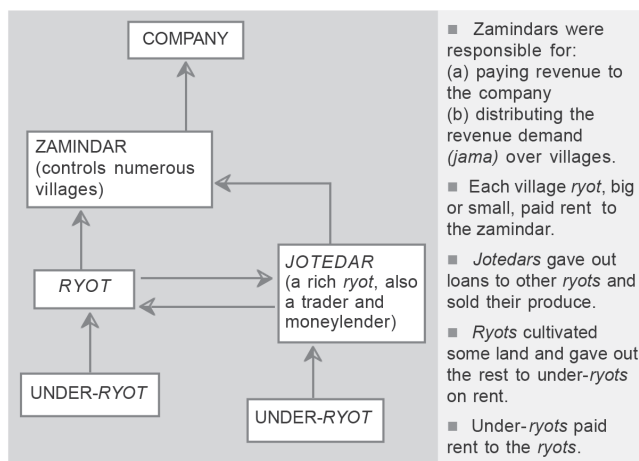
### POINTS TO PONDER

The role of Zamindars evolved under British rule. However we saw they failed to ensure proper revenue collection. Can you think of reasons why they couldn't collect it on time? How did the rise of Jotedars impact the power dynamics of society?



**Figure 3.38: Bengal village scene, painted by George Chinnery, 1820** during his 23-year stay in India from 1802 to 1825, Chinnery painted various facets of Indian life, capturing the lifestyles of different classes.

- ❖ **Power Dynamics (Refer to Figure 3.39):** Jotedars wielded more effective power in villages than distant urban-based zamindars. They actively resisted zamindari influence, delayed revenue payments, and even bought out zamindari lands at auctions.



**Figure 3.39: Power Dynamics in Rural Bengal**

**The Jotedars of Dinajpur:**

- **Resistance against Zamindars:** The jotedars of Dinajpur, North Bengal, exhibited fierce resistance to the authority of zamindars. They recognized that traditional zamindars held limited power over them.
- **Cultivation and Revenue Tactics:** Jotedars who cultivated significant lands often withheld part of their dues, causing a backlog in every instalment (kist). They occupied more lands than what their official contracts (pottahs) allowed.
- **Countering Zamindari Officials:** When zamindari officials reprimanded jotedars, they would retaliate by lodging complaints at local judicial and police establishments. They encouraged petty ryots not to pay their revenue, further undermined zamindari control.
- **Zamindar's Viewpoint:** Traditional landlords disapproved of jotedars but recognized their importance, especially in instances where landlords wouldn't financially support needy tenants.

**The Resistance of Zamindars:**

- ❖ **Tactics for Survival:** Facing high revenue demands, zamindars devised strategies like fictitious sales to retain control. The Raja of Burdwan, as an example, used a series of manoeuvres to counter the British Company's revenue demands.
- ❖ **Evolution of Burdwan's Leadership:** When the Permanent Settlement came into effect, **Tejchand served as the Raja of Burdwan**. His successor, Mehtab Chand (**Refer to Figure 3.40**), ushered in a period of prosperity for the estate. Notably, Mehtab Chand aligned with the British during significant events like the Santhal rebellion and the 1857 revolt.
- ❖ **Fictitious Sales Explained:** The zamindar would manipulate auction processes, often buying back their own lands at reduced prices. Between 1793 and 1801, such activities amounted to a massive Rs. 30 lakh.
- ❖ **Resistance to Outsiders:** New buyers of auctioned estates often faced aggression from the previous zamindar's forces or even loyal ryots. Loyalty to the traditional zamindar system persisted among villagers, complicating the land sale process.
- ❖ **The Beginning of the 19th Century:** As price depression ended and revenue payment rules became flexible, zamindari power strengthened. However, the **Great Depression of the 1930s** marked a decline in their power, with jotedars becoming dominant.



**Figure 3.40: Maharaja Mehtab Chand (1820-79)**

**The Fifth Report and its Implications****Introduction to the Fifth Report:**

- ❖ **Documentation:** The Fifth Report, submitted to the British Parliament in 1813, meticulously documented the operations and activities of the East India Company in India.
- ❖ **Composition:** It comprised 1002 pages, with over 800 pages dedicated to appendices, including petitions, district collector reports, revenue statistics, and administrative notes on Bengal and Madras.
- ❖ **Importance:** Produced by a **Select Committee**, this report significantly influenced parliamentary debates about the nature of the Company's rule in India.

**POINTS TO PONDER**

The Fifth report summarises British rule in India. It holds that there was a significant decline of traditional zamindari power. However, it wasn't the case. Can you think of reasons for how Zamindars maintained their power?



## Backdrop of the Company's Rule in Bengal:

- ❖ **Scrutiny in England:** Since the Company took control of Bengal in the mid-1760s, its actions were heavily scrutinised and debated in England.
- ❖ **Opposition in Britain:**
  - ❖ Numerous factions in Britain contested the East India Company's monopoly over trade with India and China.
  - ❖ Private traders aspired for a share in the India trade, while British industrialists wanted access to the Indian market.
  - ❖ **National Benefit Concern:** Political groups felt the conquest of Bengal mainly benefitted the Company, sidelining the larger British nation.
- ❖ **Regulations and Oversight:**
  - ❖ **Publicising Misdeeds:** Incidents highlighting the Company's mismanagement, greed, and corruption were regularly reported in the media.
  - ❖ **Parliamentary Interventions:** To regulate the Company, the British Parliament passed multiple Acts in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
  - ❖ **Mandatory Reports:** The Company was mandated to regularly submit reports about its Indian administration.
- ❖ **Depiction in Popular Culture:** Satyajit Ray's film, "Jalshaghar," which showcases the decline of the aristocratic zamindari lifestyle, was filmed in Andul Raj Palace. (Refer to Figure 3.41)



Figure 3.41: Andul Raj Palace

- ❖ **Analysing the Report:**
  - ❖ **Significance:** The Fifth Report, for over 150 years, has shaped perceptions of events in rural Bengal during the late 18th century.
  - ❖ **Reading with Caution:** While the evidence in the Fifth Report is invaluable, it's essential to approach it critically. Understanding the authors and their motivations is crucial.
  - ❖ **Recent Research Critiques:** Newer studies suggested that the report might have exaggerated the decline of traditional zamindari power and overemphasised the scale of land loss by zamindars.

- ❖ **Reality of Zamindari Displacements:** Contrary to the report's claims, many zamindars managed to retain their lands and power, even when their properties were auctioned.

## Conclusion

The impacts of British colonial rule are evident in the shifts in cultivation practices, imposition of forest laws, trade exploitations, and the rise of revolts. Key figures, like Birsa Munda, symbolise the spirit of resistance that characterises these communities. This exploration not only underlines the vulnerabilities faced by the tribals but also celebrates their strength, unity, and indomitable spirit in the face of adversity. As we glance back at history, it is crucial to remember and respect the contributions of these communities to India's rich heritage.

### Timeline

<b>1765</b>	English East India Company acquires Diwani of Bengal
<b>1773</b>	Regulating Act passed by the British Parliament to regulate the activities of the East India Company
<b>1793</b>	Permanent Settlement in Bengal
<b>1800s</b>	Santhals begin to come to the Rajmahal hills and settle there
<b>1818</b>	First revenue settlement in the Bombay Deccan
<b>1820s</b>	Agricultural prices begin to fall
<b>1840s-50s</b>	A slow process of agrarian expansion in the Bombay Deccan
<b>1855-56</b>	Santhal rebellion
<b>1861</b>	Cotton boom begins
<b>1875</b>	<i>Ryots</i> in Deccan villages rebel
<b>1895</b>	Birsa Munda's movement takes prominence
<b>1900</b>	Demise of Birsa Munda
<b>1910</b>	Bastar Rebellion
<b>1940</b>	Warli Revolt in Maharashtra

### Glossary

- **Raja:** Raja (literally king) was a term that was often used to designate powerful zamindars.
- **Taluqdar:** Taluqdar literally means "one who holds a taluq" or a connection. Taluq came to refer to a territorial unit.
- **Benami:** Benami, literally anonymous, is a term used in Hindi and several other Indian languages for transactions made in the name of a fictitious or relatively insignificant person, whereas the real beneficiary remains unnamed.
- **Lathyal:** Lathyal, literally one who wields the lathi or stick, functioned as a strongman of the zamindar.
- **Aquatint:** Aquatint is a picture produced by cutting into a copper sheet with acid and then printing it.
- **Rentier:** Rentier is a term used to designate people who live on rental income from property.
- **Mahal:** In British revenue records, mahal is a revenue estate which may be a village or a group of villages.
- **Plantation:** A large farm operated by a planter employing various forms of forced labour. Plantations are associated with the production of coffee, sugarcane, tobacco, tea and cotton.



- **Slave:** A person who is owned by someone else – the slave owner. A slave has no freedom and is compelled to work for the master.
- **Bigha:** A unit of measurement of land. Before British rule, the size of this area varied. In Bengal the British standardised it to about one-third of an acre.
- **Vat:** A fermenting or storage vessel.
- **Fallow:** A field left uncultivated for a while so that the soil recovers fertility
- **Sal:** A tree
- **Mahua:** A flower that is eaten or used to make alcohol.
- **Bewar:** A term used in Madhya Pradesh for shifting cultivation.
- **Sleeper:** The horizontal planks of wood on which railway lines are laid.
- **Ryot:** Ryot is the way the term raiyat, used to designate peasants, was spelt in British records. Ryots in Bengal did not always cultivate the land directly, but leased it out to under-ryots.
- **Jhum Cultivators:** Tribes practising shifting cultivation primarily in forests.
- **Khonds:** A tribal community living in the forests of Orissa.
- **Baigas:** Tribal community from central India primarily dependent on forests.
- **Van Gujjars, Labadis, Gaddis, Bakarwals:** Pastoral tribal groups that moved seasonally.
- **Verrier Elwin:** Anthropologist and tribal activist who documented tribal customs.
- **Dikus:** Term often used by tribals referring to outsiders or oppressors.
- **Kols Rebellion:** Major revolt by the Kols community against external oppressors.
- **Santhal Uprising:** Revolt by the Santhals against exploitation by landlords and moneylenders.
- **Bastar Rebellion:** Revolt by tribes of the Bastar region against British policies.
- **Warli Revolt:** Movement against land injustices by the Warli community.
- **Satyug:** The golden age as mentioned in Hindu scriptures.
- **Munda Raj:** Vision of a kingdom ruled by Mundas.
- **Diwani:** Revenue rights.
- **Regulating Act:** Legislation to regulate East India Company's activities.
- **Permanent Settlement:** Land revenue system introduced by the British in Bengal.
- **Rajmahal hills:** Area in Eastern India where Santhals settled.
- **Deccan:** Plateau region in peninsular India.
- **Forest laws:** Regulations introduced by the British curtailing tribal rights in forests.
- **Moneylenders:** Individuals offering loans at high interest rates.
- **Tribal Chiefs:** Leaders or headmen of tribal groups.
- **British Colonial Rule:** Period of British dominion in India.
- **Tribal Lamentations:** Songs or oral traditions conveying tribal hardships.
- **Cotton Boom:** Period of increased cotton demand and production.
- **Revenue Settlement:** Process of assigning revenue amounts to be paid by each village or individual.
- **Pastoral Tribes:** Tribes primarily involved in herding and moving seasonally with livestock.
- **Settled Cultivation:** Cultivation practice where tribes permanently settled and cultivated the same land repeatedly.
- **Shifting Cultivation:** Cultivation method involving moving to new fields after each harvest.





# Revolt of 1857

**Bibliography:** The chapter encompasses the summary of **Chapter 5 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III), and **Theme X - XII NCERT** (Themes in Indian History-III ).

## Introduction

The Revolt of 1857, often dubbed as **the “First War of Independence”**, was a watershed moment in India’s colonial history. Originating from a sepoy mutiny in Meerut due to varied grievances, it rapidly expanded into a broad-based revolt. Post-revolt, the East India Company’s control ceded to the British Crown, initiating direct imperial governance. Subsequent changes included shielding princely states from annexation, restructuring the army to limit Indian soldiers, and increased suspicion towards Muslims. Moreover, the British became more considerate of local customs to prevent cultural unrest. While 1857 remains pivotal, revolts like the Khurda Uprising also echoed India’s resistance spirit.

## The Revolt of 1857 and Its Representations

### Backdrop of the Rebellion:

Popular resistances can sometimes escalate to such an extent that they cripple the power of the state. It requires organization, communication, and confidence among the people.

By 1857, after a century of rule, the English East India Company confronted a vast rebellion that began in May, putting its very presence in India in jeopardy. Many view this as the 19th century’s largest armed resistance to colonialism globally.

### The Spark from Meerut to Delhi: The Events of the Revolt

- ❖ On 8 April 1857, Mangal Pandey (**Refer to Figure 4.1**) was executed for assaulting his superiors in Barrackpore. Later, in Meerut, sepoys refused to use new cartridges, rumored to be greased with cow and pig fat. Eighty-five of them were jailed on 9 May 1857 for disobedience.
- ❖ On 10 May, other Meerut sepoys liberated the imprisoned colleagues, attacked British officers, and declared war on foreigners.
- ❖ On the late afternoon of 10<sup>th</sup> May 1857, a mutiny erupted in the Meerut cantonment. The unrest began within the native infantry, swiftly spreading to the cavalry and subsequently, the city. (**Refer to Figure 4.2**)



**Figure 4.1: Postal stamp issued in commemoration of Mangal Pandey**



Search on Telegram @apna\_pdf



Figure 4.2: The battle in the cavalry lines

- ❖ The sepoys launched an attack on white residents, leading to widespread ransacking and destruction of properties. Ordinary citizens of the area joined the sepoys in their rebellion.
- ❖ Vital government establishments like the record office, jail, post office, and treasury faced devastation. The telegraph link to Delhi was severed.
- ❖ The Meerut sepoys reached Delhi the next morning. Joining with Delhi regiments, they rebelled and eventually coerced the hesitant **Bahadur Shah Zafar** (Refer to Figure 4.3) into leadership. This pivotal decision made the aging emperor rally chiefs and rulers against the British.
- ❖ It became evident that Delhi was no longer under British control. Sepoys sought blessings from emperor Bahadur Shah, offering a sense of legitimacy to their uprising.



Figure 4.3: Portrait of Bahadur Shah

### The Magnitude of the Rebellion:

- ❖ The Mughal dynasty's historical significance meant many local rulers hoped to regain their territories under Mughal dominion if the emperor was restored.
- ❖ **On 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> May**, North India remained largely calm. However, as news of Delhi's fall disseminated, other regions too began to rise in rebellion. (Refer to Figure 4.4)



Figure 4.4: As the mutiny spread, British officers were killed in the cantonments

- ❖ The British had not anticipated the revolt to escalate to this degree. Bahadur Shah Zafar's endorsement of the rebellion reshaped the dynamics, instilling hope and enthusiasm among the masses.

## Rebellion Spreads Across Regions (Refer to figure 4.5):

- ❖ After Delhi's fall, uprisings mushroomed post a brief lull. Regiments rebelled and converged on key locations like Delhi, Kanpur, and Lucknow.
- ❖ People, local leaders, and chiefs joined the mutineers. Notable figures included Nana Saheb, who declared himself Peshwa under Bahadur Shah Zafar; in Lucknow, Birjis Qadr became the new Nawab under the Mughal emperor, and his mother, Begum Hazrat Mahal, played a pivotal role in the revolt.
- ❖ Rani Lakshmibai and Tantia Tope teamed up against the British, and Rani Avantibai Lodhi led an army in Madhya Pradesh.
- ❖ Several battles saw the British face defeat, leading many to believe that British rule was effectively over. Awadh especially became a hotbed of rebellion.



Figure 4.5: Some important centres of the Revolt in North India

## Pattern of the Rebellion

### General Characteristics of the Revolt:

- ❖ **Chain of Events:** The pattern suggested that the mutiny in one town incited a similar reaction in the next. (Refer to Figure 4.6)
- ❖ **Starting Signals:** Most uprisings began with a distinct signal, such as the firing of an evening gun or the sound of a bugle.
- ❖ **Targets:** The first targets were typically the bell of arms followed by the treasury. Government facilities became prime targets for destruction. Anything or anyone associated with the British was under threat.
- ❖ **Rejection of British Rule:** The proclamations denounced British annexations and broken treaties, emphasizing the unreliability of the British.
- ❖ **Wider Rebellion:** Beyond opposing the British, the revolt targeted their allies and other local oppressors. Symbolic actions, like burning account books, signaled a desire to overturn traditional hierarchies.
- ❖ **Medium:** Proclamations in Hindi, Urdu, and Persian were issued, urging the local population to rally against the firangis.
- ❖ **Role of Common People:** As more ordinary people became involved, the targets of the rebellion diversified.
  - ❖ In prominent towns, even money-lenders and affluent residents faced the wrath of the rebels.
- ❖ **Impact on British:** During May and June, the British seemed ill-equipped to counter the rebels. As a British officer observed, their rule "collapsed like a house made of cards."
  - ❖ As the revolt gathered momentum, it began to **signify a broader defiance against established authority and societal hierarchy.**

### POINTS TO PONDER

The spread of the revolt was mainly through the northern plains in Awadh, Lucknow, Meerut region and to central India to some extent. However we don't see much of revolt in southern India in Madras and Bombay presidency. Can you think what may be the reasons for this?



Figure 4.6. Ordinary people joined the sepoys in attacking the British in Lucknow



### Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Life in the Cities During the Revolt

- Regular activities saw a significant breakdown such as scarcity of essentials, like vegetables, became a common concern in the bazaars.
- With water-carriers ceasing their work, fetching water became a task even for the well-off. The lack of basic amenities raised concerns about worsening health conditions in the cities.

## Understanding the Responsible Factors

### The Power of Rumors and Prophecies:

#### ❖ The Spread of Fearful Tales:

- ❖ **The Enfield Rifle Controversy:** Sepoys in Delhi believed that bullets for the Enfield rifles were coated with cow and pig fat, which would harm their religion and caste.
  - ❑ Although the British tried to dispel this belief, the rumor persisted, gaining momentum across North India's sepoy lines.
- ❖ **The Tale's Origin:** Captain Wright shared an incident from January 1857: A "low-caste" khalasi retaliated to a Brahmin sepoy's refusal to share water by warning him of the impure cartridges.
  - ❑ Regardless of the story's accuracy, it stoked fear, and British reassurances could not curb the spreading anxiety.

#### ❖ Other Frightening Whispers:

##### ❖ A Grand British Conspiracy:

- ❑ Rumors spread that the British had a massive plan to destroy the religions of Hindus and Muslims.
- ❑ Claims arose that cow and pig bone dust had been mixed into the flour sold in markets. Such fears further pushed the belief that the British aimed to convert Indians to Christianity.
- ❖ **The Prophecy:** Prophecies strengthened the response to these rumors. Predictions foretold the end of British rule on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Plassey, 23 June 1857.

#### ❖ Mysterious Chapattis:

- ❖ Across North India, reports emerged about the night-time distribution of chapattis from one village to another.
- ❖ The recipient was often instructed to produce more chapattis and pass them onto the next village.
- ❖ While the intent behind this distribution remains unclear, it was undoubtedly perceived as a sign of impending upheaval.

### The Roots of Belief in Rumors:

#### ❖ Delving Beyond Factuality:

- ❖ To grasp the impact of rumors and prophecies in history, one should not merely assess their accuracy.
- ❖ It is crucial to discern the emotions, anxieties, beliefs, and convictions of the people who believed in these tales.

### ❖ The Context of British Policies:

- ❖ The East India Company's policies influenced various groups, including kings, queens, peasants, landlords, tribals, and soldiers. There was evident resistance from people against policies that jeopardized their interests or sentiments.
- ❖ The potency of the 1857 rumors is better understood against the backdrop of the British policies from the late 1820s. Under **Governor General Lord William Bentinck**, the British initiated reforms targeting Indian society:
  - ❑ They introduced Western education, ideas, and institutions.
  - ❑ Collaborating with specific Indian groups, they established English-medium educational institutions teaching Western sciences and liberal arts.
  - ❑ They introduced laws to end practices like sati (1829) and allowed Hindu widow remarriage.
- ❖ After 1830, Christian missionaries were allowed greater freedoms, including land ownership. The 1850 law made it easier for Christian converts to inherit their ancestral properties.
- ❖ The British also annexed various territories, including Awadh, Jhansi, and Satara, on diverse grounds. Following annexation, they integrated their administrative system, laws, and methods for land settlement and revenue collection.

### ❖ The Resounding Impact on North India (Refer to Figure 4.7.):

- ❖ The populace felt that their traditions, sacred values, societal structures, and landholding methods were under siege.
- ❖ This feeling intensified with the British replacing familiar systems with seemingly distant, foreign, and oppressive ones.
- ❖ The activities of Christian missionaries further exacerbated these apprehensions.
- ❖ **Rapid Spread of Rumors:** In such an atmosphere of distrust and instability, rumors found fertile ground, spreading quickly.



Figure 4.7: Territories under British control in 1857

## Firangi Raj and the End of a World: Awadh in Revolt

- ❖ To delve deeper into the reasons behind the 1857 revolt, examining the scenario in Awadh is essential, given its central role in the events of that year (**Refer to Figure 4.8**).
- ❖ **“A cherry that will drop into our mouth one day”:**
  - ❖ **Lord Dalhousie’s Vision (1851):** He foresaw the annexation of the kingdom of Awadh.
  - ❖ **Subsidiary Alliance (1801):** This treaty weakened the Nawab’s military power and increased British influence in the region.
  - ❖ **British Interest:** Awadh had fertile soil ideal for indigo and cotton cultivation, and was strategically placed for trade.
  - ❖ **Annexation Context:** By the 1850s, the British had taken over major Indian regions, and annexing Awadh in 1856 was a continuation of this expansion, which started with the conquest of Bengal.
- ❖ **Impact of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah’s Removal:**
  - ❖ **Public Grief:** Lord Dalhousie’s annexations, especially in Awadh, led to significant public unrest. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah’s exile caused immense sorrow.
  - ❖ **Nawab’s Popularity:** Contrary to British beliefs, the Nawab was a cherished figure. His departure to Calcutta was mourned by many.
  - ❖ **Cultural Impact:** The Nawab’s removal dissolved the courtly culture, leaving several professions, from musicians to administrators, jobless.
- ❖ **Public Discontent with the British Rule:** Different segments of Awadh society, from prince to peasant, associated the foreign (firangi) rule with the disintegration of their traditional world. The revolt in Awadh became a symbol of public resistance against the alien governance.
  - ❖ In rural areas, there was significant displeasure due to oppressive taxation and stringent revenue collection mechanisms.
  - ❖ Unable to repay loans, many peasants forfeited the lands they had cultivated for generations.
- ❖ **Displacement of the Taluqdars:** Taluqdars, controlling vast estates and forts in Awadh, maintained troops, built fortifications, and exercised autonomy, recognizing the Nawab’s supremacy.
  - ❖ **British Intervention:** British policy aimed to reduce the power of the taluqdars, leading to their disarmament and the destruction of their forts.
  - ❖ **Land Revenue Policy:** The British questioned the legitimacy of the taluqdars’ hold over land. The **Summary Settlement of 1856** drastically reduced their control over villages.
  - ❖ **Impact on Peasants:** The changes upset the traditional relationship between peasants and taluqdars, leading to direct, and often harsh, interactions with British revenue collectors.
  - ❖ **Raja Hanwant Singh of Kalakankar:** He expressed the sentiments of the taluqdars. Despite having previously aided a British officer, he openly expressed his intent to march against the British, highlighting the profound grievances against British land policies and annexation.



**Figure 4.8: Zamindar from Awadh, 1880**

### POINTS TO PONDER

We saw how the biased narrative and rumours helped in spreading the anti-British sentiment. Can you think of what role did the means of mass communication like Newspapers played to support the Indian National movement in later years? Also can you relate how this misinformation and its consequences impact our current society?



### ❖ **Sepoys and their Discontent:**

- ❖ **Relation with White Officers:** The once cordial relationship between the sepoy and their superior officers deteriorated in the 1840s. The racial divide deepened, leading to suspicion and mistrust. **(Refer to Figure 4.9)**



**Figure 4.9: Bangal sepoy in European-style uniform**

- ❖ **Greased Cartridges Incident:** This was a clear example of the growing divide and the insensitivity of the British towards Indian beliefs.
- ❖ **Connection with Rural Awadh:** The sepoy, primarily from Awadh and eastern Uttar Pradesh, were closely linked with their villages. Their individual grievances echoed in the villages and vice-versa.
- ❖ **Discrimination at Various Ends:** Indian sepoy serving the Company voiced concerns about their pay, service conditions, and regulations that infringed on their religious beliefs.
- ❖ **Rebellion:** When the sepoy rebelled, they were quickly joined by villagers in collective acts of defiance. **(Refer to Figure 4.10)**



**Figure 4.10: Sepoy exchange news and rumours in the bazaars of north India**

### **Decline of Nawabs and Rajas' Power:**

- ❖ Since the mid-eighteenth century, nawabs and rajas experienced a significant loss of power, authority, and respect.
- ❖ The Company stationed residents in many courts, leading to reduced freedom for rulers, disbandment of their armies, and the phased annexation of their territories.
- ❖ Rulers like Rani Lakshmibai and Nana Saheb attempted to negotiate with the Company for their interests, but their pleas were often denied.
- ❖ The annexation of Awadh in 1856 was justified by Governor-General Dalhousie on grounds of misgovernance.
- ❖ The Company had intentions to abolish the Mughal dynasty which is evident from their removal of the Mughal king's name from coins and other decisions related to the Mughal family.



## Lines of Communication

### Planning and Coordination:

- ❖ The similarity in the pattern of the revolt across different regions was due to its planning and coordination. Clear evidence of communication existed among the sepoy lines of various cantonments.
  - ❖ For instance, the **7<sup>th</sup> Awadh Irregular Cavalry**, after refusing new cartridges, communicated with the **48<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry** about their decision.
- ❖ **Coordinated Movements:** Movement of sepoys or their representatives from one station to another suggests planning and discussion concerning the uprising.
  - ❖ The patterns and evidence pointing to planning and coordination bring forth several questions regarding the orchestrators and their strategy. Getting direct answers based on available documents remains difficult.
- ❖ **Frequent Panchayats:** Charles Ball, a historian, mentioned frequent panchayats in the Kanpur sepoy lines, indicating some decisions were made collectively.
- ❖ **Captain Hearsey of Awadh:** An incident involving Captain Hearsey of the Awadh Military Police provides a hint. He was protected by his Indian subordinates, when the 41<sup>st</sup> Native Infantry desired his imprisonment or death.
  - ❖ A decision was reached to let a panchayat of native officers from each regiment settle the matter.
- ❖ Given the shared living conditions, common lifestyle, and often similar caste backgrounds of sepoys, it's plausible they decided on their course of action together, showcasing that the sepoys were the architects of their own revolt.

#### Sisten and the Tahsildar

- **Francois Sisten**, a native Christian police inspector from Sitapur, offers an insight into the communication regarding the revolt.
- While in Shaharanpur, Sisten had an interaction with a Muslim tahsildar from Bijnor, who hinted at knowledge of the uprising in Awadh and showed confidence in their eventual success. This tahsildar was later identified as a main rebel leader from Bijnor.

### Leaders and Followers:

- ❖ The events of 1857 saw leaders and warriors from across the country unite in a fierce struggle against British dominion.
- ❖ As the resistance gained momentum, new leaders surfaced. Ahmadullah Shah, a maulvi from Faizabad, predicted the end of British rule, rallying a large force against them in Lucknow.
- ❖ In Delhi, religious warriors or ghazis sought to eliminate the British, while Bakht Khan emerged as a principal military figure.
- ❖ **Local Leaders Stepped Up:** In various places, leadership was either assumed or imposed:
  - ❖ In Kanpur, **Nana Sahib (Refer to Figure 4.11)** became the leader after pressure from sepoys and locals.
  - ❖ **Rani of Jhansi (Refer to Figure 4.12)** and **Kunwar Singh of Arrah** in Bihar found themselves in similar situations.
    - ❑ In Bihar, Kunwar Singh, (Refer to Figure 4.13) an elderly zamindar, allied with rebel sepoys, resisted the British for several months.



Figure 4.11. A portrait of Nana Sahib

- ✧ In Lucknow, following the dethroning of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, his son Birjis Qadr became the people's choice as leader.

#### ❖ Seeking Traditional Leadership:

- ✧ For successful resistance against the British, the rebels needed leadership and organization. Oftentimes, rebels sought those who held power before the British takeover.
  - ❑ In Meerut, for instance, sepoys approached the Mughal emperor in Delhi, **Bahadur Shah**, to lead the revolt. Though initially hesitant, he eventually assumed a nominal leadership role, particularly after sepoys entered the Mughal court.
- ✧ However, not all leaders were from nobility. Many ordinary individuals, including religious figures, also played key roles. For instance:
  - ❑ A fakir in Meerut became a point of interest for sepoys.
  - ❑ Post the annexation of Awadh, religious leaders in Lucknow prophesied the fall of the British.
  - ❑ Leaders like **Shah Mal and Gonoo** inspired local communities to rebel.



Figure 4.12: Rani Lakshmi Bai, a popular image



Figure 4.13: A Portrait of Vir Kunwar Singh

#### Spotlight on Two Rebels

##### ➤ Shah Mal:

- A resident of a large village in pargana Barout, Uttar Pradesh, Shah Mal belonged to the Jat community with ties spanning across eighty-four villages.
- Due to British taxation, many in his community faced land loss to traders and moneylenders.
- Mobilizing locals against the British, Shah Mal's revolt expanded into a broader uprising against oppression. His rebels disrupted British communication, infrastructure, and supported mutinied sepoys.
- Known locally as 'Raja', he established a makeshift justice system and an intelligence network. However, his reign was short-lived as he died in battle in July 1857.

##### ➤ Maulvi Ahmadullah Shah:

- An influential maulvi, he advocated for **jihad** against the British.
- Known as "Danka Shah" due to his grand processions with drumbeaters, he garnered a significant following.
- Despite being jailed in Faizabad in 1857, he emerged as a leader for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Native Infantry and showcased valor at the Battle of Chinhat.
- People revered him, believing in his invincibility and magical prowess. These beliefs solidified his leadership role during the revolt.

### Sidebar: Subsidiary Alliance

- Lord Wellesley introduced this system in 1798. Allies under this system had to:
  - Accept British protection against threats.
  - House a British military contingent.
  - Finance this contingent.
  - Seek British approval for external treaties or warfare.

## Through the Eyes of the People

### Vishnubhatt Godse's Account from "Majha Pravaas":

- ❖ Vishnubhatt Godse, a Brahman from Maharashtra, narrated his encounter with sepoys while travelling to Mathura for a yajna.
- ❖ The sepoys warned of an impending massive upheaval, believing that the British aimed to obliterate Hindu and Muslim religions.
- ❖ According to the sepoys, the British formulated a list of eighty-four rules, which they presented to prominent kings and princes in Calcutta.
- ❖ These rulers reportedly rejected these rules, cautioning the British of significant consequences and unrest if implemented.
- ❖ The rulers supposedly returned to their domains in anger, planning collectively for a religious war. This covert plan was allegedly disseminated from Meerut's cantonment (**Refer to Figure 4.14**) through letters to various other cantonments.



**Figure 4.14: Rebel sepoys at Meerut attack officers, enter their homes and set fire to buildings**

### Subedar Sitaram Pande's Memoirs from "From Sepoy to Subedar":

- ❖ Subedar Sitaram Pande, who served the British for 48 years, witnessed the suppression of the rebellion, even when his son, a rebel, was executed by the British.
- ❖ Sitaram Pande believed that the annexation of Oudh sowed seeds of mistrust among the sepoys against the British government.
- ❖ Agents from the Nawab of Oudh and the King of Delhi traveled across India to gauge the army's disposition. They influenced the sepoys by recounting the perceived treachery of the foreigners towards their king.

- ❖ These agents disseminated numerous lies and promises to incite the soldiers to revolt, with the intention of reinstating the Emperor of Delhi.
- ❖ Around the same period, rumors spread about the new rifle cartridges being lubricated with cow and pig fat, offending both Hindu and Muslim religious sentiments.
- ❖ Sepoys from regiments communicated this information, leading to widespread agitation.
- ❖ While many highlighted that the British had respected their religious beliefs for four decades, the annexation of Oudh had already provoked discontent. There was a prevalent belief that the cartridge introduction was a ploy by the British to convert everyone to Christianity.
- ❖ Despite the palpable tension, Colonel Sahib anticipated the unrest would subside and suggested that Sitaram Pande return home.

## What the Rebels Wanted?

### Background:

- ❖ The British largely dominate the historical records of the 1857 events, painting the rebels in a negative light.
- ❖ The perspective of the rebels, mainly illiterate sepoys and commoners, is limited, with only a handful of proclamations and ishtahars providing insight.

### The Vision of Unity:

- ❖ **Religious Harmony:** The rebellion reached out to both Hindus and Muslims, emphasizing unity against the British. This proclamation underlines the historical co-existence during the Mughal period.
- ❖ **British Interference:** Despite British efforts to stir religious discord, the unity of the rebels remained strong.
- ❖ The 1857 rebels sought to preserve their religion, culture, dignity, and economic interests against British transgressions. Their unity was rooted in these shared values and challenges.

### The Azamgarh Proclamation (25 August 1857):

- ❖ **The Plight of Zamindars:** The British imposed heavy revenue demands and disrespected the zamindars. The Badshahi government offered more respectful and lenient terms.
- ❖ **The Struggles of Merchants:** The British monopolized major trades, leaving little for native traders. The Badshahi government pledged to support and free native trade.
- ❖ **The Grievances of Public Servants:** Under British rule, native public servants faced low pay and respect. The Badshahi government proposed higher salaries and positions.
- ❖ **The Challenges of Artisans:** British goods made native artisans jobless. The Badshahi government assured them exclusive employment opportunities.
- ❖ **The Call to Religious Leaders:** The British were viewed as enemies of both major religions. Religious leaders were thus called to join the rebellion.

### The Sepoys' Perspective:

- ❖ **A Historical Overview:** Sepoys looked back at their long-standing service under the British. They attributed British conquests in India to their support.
- ❖ **The Trigger:** The introduction of religiously offensive cartridges by the British sparked the rebellion. Subsequent punitive measures by the British deepened the sepoys' resolve to fight for their faith.



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### Pursuit of Alternate Authority:

- ❖ **Restoring Previous Power Structures:** Following the collapse of British rule in certain areas, rebels aimed to reinstate pre-British systems, reminiscent of the 18th-century Mughal era.
- ❖ **Efforts in Administration:** Leaders attempted to form administrative systems, with appointments, revenue collections, and army orders which focused on battling the British.
- ❖ **The Mughal Connection:** The eighteenth-century Mughal world was idealized as a symbol of what was lost under the British.
- ❖ **Administrative Limitations:** While these structures were mainly war-centric, they couldn't withstand prolonged British opposition, except in Awadh where they persisted into early 1858.

### Repression and British Countermeasures in 1857

#### The Challenge for the British:

- ❖ The Intensity of the Rebellion was so profound that the British faced immense difficulty in suppressing the 1857 revolt (**Refer to Figure 4.15**).
- ❖ **Implementing Martial Law:** As an emergency measure, before deploying troops, the British introduced laws in May and June 1857, placing North India under martial law.
- ❖ **Challenges of Rural Resistance:** A report from **Awadh (Oudh)** highlighted the challenges posed by villagers, who would disperse when confronted by Europeans, then regroup. Such villagers were large in number and heavily armed.
- ❖ **Broad Power Allocation:** Military personnel and even ordinary Britons were empowered to judge and penalize Indians suspected of revolting. Conventional legal processes were paused, with the sole penalty for rebellion being death.

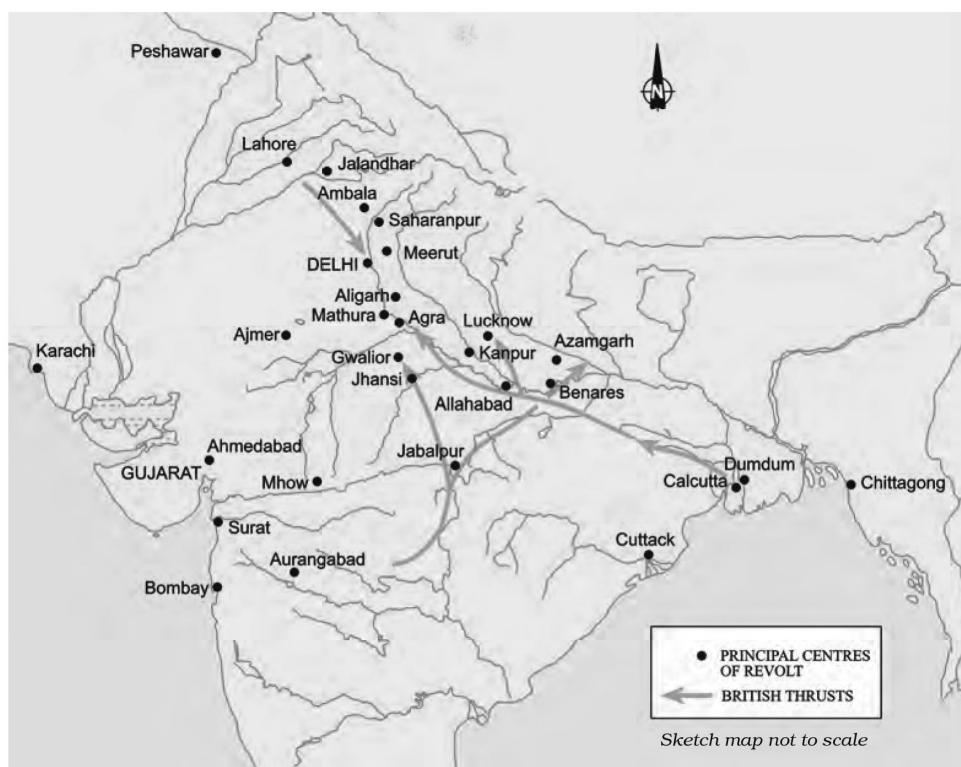


Figure 4.15: The map shows the important centres of revolts and the lines of British attack against the rebels

## Reconquering Strategy:

- ❖ **Two-Pronged Approach:** Realizing Delhi's symbolic significance, (Refer to Figure 4.16) the British launched dual attacks, one from Calcutta heading to North India and another from the comparatively calm Punjab region.



Figure 4.16: A mosque on the Delhi Ridge, photograph by Felice Beato, 1857-58

- ❖ **Recapture of Delhi:** Efforts to reclaim Delhi started in June 1857, but the city was only secured in late September due to heavy defenses by rebels from across North India.

## Reconquest of the Gangetic Plain:

- ❖ **Slow Advancements:** The British found it challenging to regain territories in the Gangetic plain, necessitating a **village-by-village approach**.
- ❖ **Widespread Rebellion:** The British recognized the vast public support behind the uprising. In Awadh, an official estimated that about three-quarters of the adult male population was being rebellious. Control was re-established only by March 1858 after prolonged conflict.

### POINTS TO PONDER

The revolt of 1857 had limited success to fight the British at national level. The rebels were just peasants in uniforms. What may be the reasons for the pan India response? Can you compare why the later Indian national movement was successful and not 1857?



## Tactics Employed by the British:

- ❖ **Utilization of Massive Military Might:** The British deployed extensive military resources.
- ❖ **Divide and Rule:** In regions like Uttar Pradesh, where there was joint resistance from large landholders and peasants, the British attempted to disrupt this unity. They promised loyal big landholders their properties back, while rebels were dispossessed. Many rebel landholders either perished in battle against the British or fled to Nepal, while many succumbed to illnesses or hunger.

## Images of the Revolt

- ❖ **Sources of Information:** The main perspective comes from British accounts. A few records provide the rebel viewpoint through proclamations and letters.
  - ✧ The British shared their experiences in letters, diaries, and official histories.
- ❖ **Visual Records:** The variety of visuals include paintings, drawings, etchings, and prints.

## Celebrating the Saviours:

- ❖ **“Relief of Lucknow” by Thomas Jones Barker (1859):** The painting depicts the siege of Lucknow, presenting the British as heroes. (Refer to Figure 4.17 and 4.18). The art narrates survival, resistance, and the British triumph. The central figures are Campbell, Outram, and Havelock.



Figure 4.17: Secundrah Bagh, Lucknow, photograph by Felice Beato, 1858



Figure 4.18: “Relief of Lucknow” painted by Thomas Jones Barker, 1859

## English Women and the Honour of Britain:

- ❖ **Public Reaction:** The reports of violence against women stirred emotions in Britain. These reports led to demands for revenge and the protection of honor.
- ❖ **“In Memoriam” by Joseph Noel Paton (Refer to Figure 4.19):** The artwork portrays the trauma of English women and children. The painting suggested violence and portrayed rebels as violent, even though they are invisible.
- ❖ **Other Imagery (Refer to Figure 4.20):** These visuals depict English women defending themselves against rebels. The depiction of Miss Wheeler resisting attackers implies a defense of Christianity.
  - ❖ The varied representations of the 1857 revolt highlight the Different perspectives of the British and the Indian nationalists.



Figure 4.19: “In memoriam”, by Joseph Neel Paton, 1859



Figure 4.20: Miss Wheeler defending herself against sepoys in Kanpur

## Vengeance and Retribution:

- ❖ **Public Sentiments:** The outrages in Britain led to demands for retribution. The visuals endorsed violent repression as a necessary form of retaliation.



- ❖ **Allegorical Representation:** The image shows a female figure of justice trampling over Indian soldiers. (Refer to figure 4.21) The depiction conveys rage and a desire for revenge.
- ❖ **The Performance of Terror:** The images show brutal executions of rebels, intending to instill fear. (Refer to Figure 4.22)



Figure 4.21: Justice, Punch, 12 September 1857

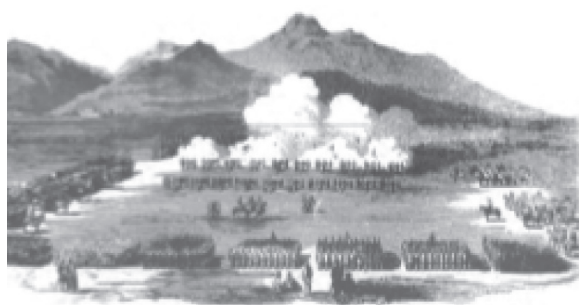


Figure 4.22: Execution of mutineers of Peshwar: Blowing from the guns, illustrated London News, 3 October 1857

- ❖ The visuals aim to demonstrate British dominance and control. (Refer to Figure 4.23 and 4.24)



Figure 4.23: "The British Lion's Vengeance on the Bengal Tiger", Punch, 1857.



Figure 4.24: Execution of mutinous sepoys in Peshawar, Illustrated London News, 3 October 1857

### No Time for Clemency:

- ❖ **Governor General Canning's Stance (Refer to figure 4.25):** The Governor advocated for moderation and mercy. The British press ridiculed him for his stance on leniency.
- ❖ **Punch's Satirical Take:** The magazine depicted Canning as protecting a bloodied sepoy. The image highlighted perceived British leniency towards rebellious sepoys.

### Nationalist Imageries:

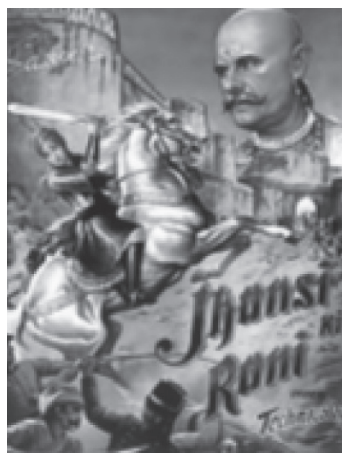
- ❖ **20<sup>th</sup> Century Perspective:** The images of this era viewed the 1857 event as the **First War of Independence**. The revolt's leaders were celebrated as heroes opposing British oppression.



Figure 4.25: "The clemency of canning" Punch, 24 October 1857



- ❖ **Iconic Representation of Rani of Jhansi (Refer to Figure 4.26):** The artwork and poems depicted her as a symbol of resistance against British rule. The literature and history emphasized her bravery and defiance against the British.



**Figure 4.26:** Films and poster have helped create the image of Rani Lakshmi Bai as a masculine warrior

### The Company's Retaliation

- ❖ **Immediate Response:** Shocked by the rebellion's magnitude, (Refer to Figure 4.27) the Company acted aggressively to suppress it.



**Figure 4.27:** Sepoys and peasants gather forces for the revolt that spread across the plains of north India in 1857

- ✧ They mobilized reinforcements from England, introduced laws facilitating easy convictions, and counterattacked the major areas of revolt.
- ❖ **Fall of Delhi:** By September 1857, Delhi was reclaimed. **Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal emperor**, was sentenced to life imprisonment and exiled to Rangoon along with his wife. He died there in 1862. (Refer to Figure 4.28, 4.29, and 4.30)



**Figure 4.28:** British forces attack the rebels who had occupied the Red Fort (on the right) and Salimgarh Fort in Delhi (on the left)



Figure 4.29: The siege train reaches Delhi



Figure 4.30: British troops blow up Kashmere Gate to enter Delhi

- ❖ **Prolonged Struggle:** The recapture of Delhi did not signify the end of the uprising. The British continued to face resistance for another two years.
- ❖ **Capture of Other Strongholds:**
  - ✧ Lucknow was seized in March 1858;
  - ✧ Rani Lakshmibai was defeated and died in June 1858;
  - ✧ Rani Avantibai, after a brief victory, opted for death when trapped by the British.
  - ✧ Tantia Tope (Refer to Figure 4.31) led a guerrilla warfare with tribal and peasant backing but was eventually captured and executed in April 1859.
- ❖ **Impact of Defeats:** As victories over the British had previously spurred the rebellion, the rebels' defeats led to desertions.
- ❖ **Conciliatory Efforts by the British:** To restore loyalty, the British promised rewards to faithful landholders, ensuring their traditional land rights.
  - ✧ Rebels were given a chance for clemency, provided they hadn't harmed any Europeans. Despite these overtures, numerous sepoys, rebels, and regional rulers were tried and executed.



Figure 4.31: Postal stamp issued in commemoration of Tantia Tope

## Aftermath of the Revolt of 1857

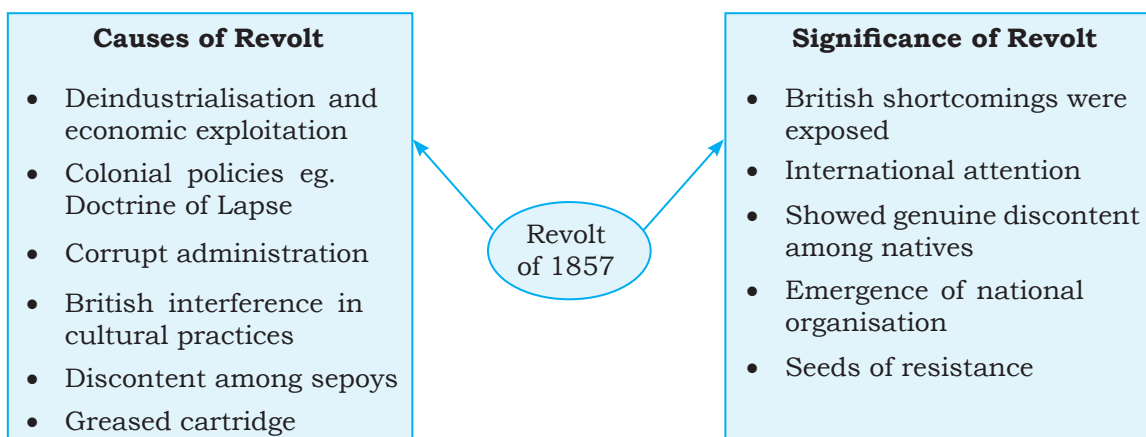
- ❖ The British realized that heavy-handed policies had provoked the rebellion and started a new phase in Indian history with these changes.
- ❖ **Transition of Power:** The 1858 Act shifted control from the East India Company to the British Crown. This centralization of power aimed to provide more responsible governance.
  - ✧ The position of **Secretary of State for India** was established, backed by the India Council.
  - ✧ The Governor-General was renamed the Viceroy, representing the British monarch directly in India.
- ❖ **Protection to Princely States:** The annexation of Indian territories was stopped and Kings were assured of passing on their territories to heirs, but they became subordinate to the British Crown.

### POINTS TO PONDER

Post the 1857 revolt we saw changes in the British policies towards decentralisation and non interference in religion. Can you think of the ways how it helped both British and the Indian rulers in particular and Indians in general?



- ❖ **Army Reorganization:** The composition of the army was changed by reducing the number of Indian soldiers and increasing European soldiers. Recruitment was realigned towards groups like Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Pathans.



- ❖ **Suspicion of Muslims:** The British largely blamed Muslims for the rebellion, leading to significant confiscation of their properties and general mistrust.
- ❖ **Respect for Local Customs:** The British committed to respecting India's religious and social customs.
- ❖ **Land Policies:** Landlords and zamindars were given more protection and security over their lands.

#### The Khurda Uprising – A Synopsis

##### Backdrop:

- The state of Khurda in Orissa faced a decline in power when **Raja Birakishore Dev** relinquished territories to the Marathas. His successor, Mukunda Dev II, felt aggrieved by this loss.
- Despite promises, the British annexed his territories and imposed oppressive policies in the region post-1803, sparking discontent.

##### Conditions Leading to Revolt:

- The British introduced policies like service tenure resumption, increased revenue demands, and insensitivity during natural calamities.
- Economic hardships arose due to new currencies, salt monopolies, and the selling of lands to foreign landlords.

##### Revolt:

- **Buxi Jagabandhu led the Paiks** (military personnel) in the rebellion. It started with an attack on a police station in Banpur in March 1817.
- Khurda became the focal point of the uprising, with local leaders and the general populace joining the revolt. The British struggled to regain control, even as the rebels declared Mukunda Dev II their ruler.

##### British Response:

- The British declared Martial Law, captured key leaders, and initiated military campaigns against the rebels.
- Rewards were declared for the capture of the main leaders.

##### End of the Rebellion:

- Major portions of the rebellion were suppressed by May 1817. However, isolated pockets of resistance, led by Bakshi Jagabandhu, continued until 1825.

**Post-rebellion Policies:**

- The British, learning from the uprising, adopted lenient policies. They reduced salt prices, reformed policing, and dismissed corrupt officials.
- The king's heir was granted privileges and land-holders were given back their properties.

**Significance:**

- The Khurda Uprising was a significant anti-British movement in Orissa, indicating the underlying unrest against colonial rule.

Terming the Khurda revolt merely as a **“Paik Rebellion”** indeed does not capture its breadth and depth. It was an early indication of widespread resistance against British policies, predating the more famous 1857 Revolt.

**Conclusion**

The Revolt of 1857 was a watershed movement, heralding a shift in British colonial policies while highlighting the deep-seated resentments against foreign rule among the Indian populace. From the visual images that depicted both vengeance and valour to the narratives of individuals like Vishnubhatt Godse and Subedar Sitaram Pande, this period remains etched as a testament to the indomitable spirit of resistance. While the revolt was suppressed, its aftermath led to significant changes, including the transition of power from the East India Company to the British Crown. Concurrently, revolts like the Khurda Uprising, though lesser-known, showcased similar sentiments of rebellion against colonial transgressions. Together, these events paved the way for a more organized and broad-based struggle for India's independence in the subsequent years.

**Timeline and Event**

<b>1801</b>	Subsidiary Alliance introduced by Wellesley in Awadh.
<b>March 29, 1817</b>	The Paik Rebellion starts, as they attack government establishments in Banpur.
<b>April 14, 1817</b>	Buxi Jagabandhu seizes Puri, with Mukunda Dev II declared as the ruler.
<b>May, 1817</b>	Uprising largely contained by the British forces.
<b>May 1825</b>	Buxi Jagabandhu surrenders, marking the end of the major Khurda uprising.
<b>1856</b>	Nawab Wajid Ali Shah deposed and Awadh is annexed.
<b>1856-57</b>	Summary revenue settlements introduced in Awadh by the British.
<b>10 May, 1857</b>	Mutiny starts in Meerut
<b>11-12 May, 1857</b>	Delhi garrisons revolt; Bahadur Shah accepts nominal leadership
<b>20-27 May, 1857</b>	Sepoys mutiny in Aligarh, Etawah, Mainpuri, Etah
<b>30 May, 1857</b>	Rising in Lucknow
<b>May-June, 1857</b>	Mutiny turns into a general revolt of the people
<b>30 June, 1857</b>	British suffer defeat in the battle of Chinhhat
<b>July, 1857</b>	Shah Mal killed in battle
<b>25 Sept, 1857</b>	British forces under Havelock and Outram enter the Residency in Lucknow
<b>June, 1858</b>	Rani Jhansi killed in battle



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## Glossary

- **Subsidiary Alliance:** A treaty between the British East India Company and Indian princely states, made them subordinate to the British.
- **Bell of Arms:** Bell of arms is a storeroom in which weapons are kept.
- **Firangi:** Firangi, a term of Persian origin, possibly derived from Frank (from which France gets its name), is used in Urdu and Hindi, often in a derogatory sense, to designate foreigners.
- **Mutiny:** Mutiny is a collective disobedience of rules and regulations within the armed forces.
- **Revolt:** Revolt is a rebellion of people against established authority and power. The terms 'revolt' and 'rebellion' can be used synonymously.
- **Resident:** Resident was the designation of a representative of the Governor General who lived in a state which was not under direct British rule.
- **Revenue Settlements:** System of revenue collection introduced by the British.
- **Sepoys:** Indian soldiers employed by the British East India Company.
- **Paiks:** Traditional militia of Orissa.
- **Sicca Rupee:** A silver coin introduced by the British.
- **Martial Law:** Military rule imposed during emergencies.
- **Anglo-Maratha conflict:** Series of wars between the Maratha Empire and the British East India Company.
- **East India Company:** An English company formed for trading with the East Indies.
- **Viceroy:** The British Crown's representative in India.
- **Zamindars:** Landowners who leased their lands to tenant farmers.
- **Gurkhas, Sikhs, Pathans:** Ethnic groups from which the British recruited soldiers.
- **Guerilla War:** A form of warfare using hit-and-run tactics.





# Women, Caste and Reforms

**Bibliography:** This Chapter encompasses a summary of **Chapter 7 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III).

## Introduction

Nowadays girls go to school, colleges and university and often study with boys and take up jobs after that. Adult women can marry anyone they like, from any caste and community, and widows can remarry too. They can vote and stand for elections like all men. But these rights are not actually enjoyed by all. Poor people have little or no access to education, and in many families, women cannot choose their husbands. Two hundred years ago, things were different. Child marriage was allowed. Both Hindu and Muslim men could have more than one wife. In some parts of the country, the practice of sati (meaning virtuous women) was praised. It was believed that if a woman was educated, she would become a widow. Thus, they had no access to education. Women's rights to property were also restricted. In most regions, people were also divided along lines of caste. In this chapter, we are going to read about the status of women and caste and social reform.

## Working Towards Change

- ❖ In the early 19th century, social customs and practices took on a new character. It was because for the first time books, newspapers, magazines, leaflets and pamphlets were printed.
- ❖ These were cheaper, more accessible for common people than the manuscripts. Now many people could write and express their ideas in their own languages.
- ❖ All kinds of social, political, economic and religious issues could now be debated and discussed by men and sometimes by women as well.
- ❖ The discussions and debates were often initiated by Indian reformers and reform groups could now reach out to a wider public, and could become linked to movements for social change.
- ❖ One such reformer was **Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)** who founded the **Brahmo Sabha** (later known as the Brahmo Samaj) in Calcutta. He was keen to spread the Western education in the country and bring about greater freedom and equality for women.

## Changing the Lives of Widows

### Abolition of Sati:

- ❖ Rammohan Roy was particularly moved by the problems of widows and began a campaign against the practice of sati (**Refer Figure 5.1**).

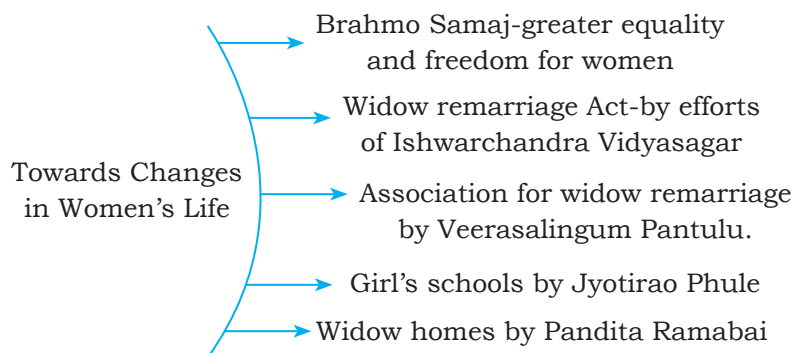


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**Figure 5.1: Practice of sati - An evidence of the barbarism of the East**

- ❖ He was well versed in Sanskrit, Persian and several other Indian and European languages, and tried to show through his writings that the practice of sati had no sanction in ancient texts.
- ❖ By the early 19th century, many British officials had also begun to criticise Indian traditions and customs and supported Rammohan by banning sati in 1829.



### Widow Remarriage

- ❖ Later on, whenever reformers wished to challenge a harmful practice they tried to find a verse or sentence in the ancient sacred texts that supported their point of view.
- ❖ **Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar**, used the ancient texts to suggest that widows could remarry and British officials in **1856 passed a law permitting widow remarriage**. Those who were against the remarriage of widows opposed him, and even boycotted him.
- ❖ But by the second half of the 19th century, in the Telugu-speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, **Veerasalingam Pantulu** formed an association favoring widow remarriage. Young intellectuals and reformers in Bombay pledged themselves to work for the same cause. In the north, **Swami Dayanand Saraswati**, who founded **Arya Samaj**, also supported widow remarriage.
- ❖ Yet, the number of widows remarried remained low and the ones who were remarried, were not easily accepted in society.

### Girls Begin Going to School

- ❖ In order to improve the condition of women, education for girls was necessary. Therefore, **Vidyasagar** in Calcutta and many other reformers in Bombay set up schools for girls.
- ❖ The very first schools were opened in the mid 19th century, but many people were afraid that schools would take girls away from home, preventing them from doing their domestic duties.

They feared that in order to reach school, girls had to travel through public places which would have a corrupting influence on them. Therefore, throughout the 19th century, most educated women were taught at home by liberal fathers or husbands and sometimes women taught themselves. For instance, **Rashsundari Debi** secretly learned to read and write in the flickering light of candles at night.

- ❖ In the latter part of the century, **Arya Samaj in Punjab**, and **Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra** established schools for girls.
- ❖ In aristocratic Muslim households in North India, women learnt to read the Koran in Arabic by women who came home to teach.
- ❖ **Mumtaz Ali**, a reformist reinterpreted verses from the Koran to argue for women's education.
- ❖ The first Urdu novels began to be written from the late 19th century meant to encourage women to read about religion and domestic management in their own language.

When girls' schools were first set up in the 19th century, it was generally believed that the curriculum for girls ought to be less taxing than that for boys. The **Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya** was one of the first institutions to provide girls with the kind of learning that was usual for boys at the time. What do you think was the reason for denial of education to women?

### Women Write About Women

- ❖ From the early 20th century, the **Begums of Bhopal** promoted education among women by founding a primary school for girls at Aligarh.
- ❖ A fearless critic of conservative ideas, **Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain** started schools for Muslim girls in Patna and Calcutta. She argued that religious leaders of every faith accorded an inferior place to women.
- ❖ By the 1880s, Indian women began to enter universities and some of them trained to be doctors, or became teachers.
- ❖ Many began to write and publish their critical views on the place of women in society such as **Tarabai Shinde**, a woman educated at home at Poona, published a book, **Stripurushtulna**, (A Comparison between Women and Men), criticising the social differences between men and women.
- ❖ **Pandita Ramabai**, a great scholar of Sanskrit, wrote a book about the miserable lives of upper-caste Hindu women. She also founded a widows' home at Poona to provide shelter to widows who had been treated badly by their husbands' relatives. Here women were trained so that they could support themselves economically.
- ❖ Many Hindu nationalists felt that Hindu women were adopting Western ways and that this would corrupt Hindu culture and erode family values. Orthodox Muslims were also worried about the impact of these changes.

#### Law Against Child Marriage

With the growth of women's organisations and the momentum for reform, people challenged another established custom of child marriage. Many Indian legislators in the Central Legislative Assembly fought to make a law preventing child marriage and finally in 1929 the **Child Marriage Restraint Act** was passed. According to the Act no man below the age of 18 and women below the age of 16 could marry. Subsequently these limits were raised to 21 for men and 18 for women. Even today over 20% of girls in India are married below the age of 18.

#### Once a woman's husband has died...

In her book, *Stripurushtulna*, Tarabai Shinde wrote: Isn't a woman's life as dear to her as yours is to you? It's as if women are meant to be made of something different from men altogether, made from dust from earth or rock or rusted iron whereas you and your lives are made from the purest gold. ...You're asking me what I mean. I mean once a woman's husband has died, ... what's in store for her? The barber comes to shave all the curls and hair off her head, just to cool your eyes. ... She is shut out from going to weddings, receptions and other auspicious occasions that married women go to. And why all these restrictions? Because her husband has died. She is unlucky: Ill fate is written on her forehead. Her face is not to be seen, it's a bad omen.

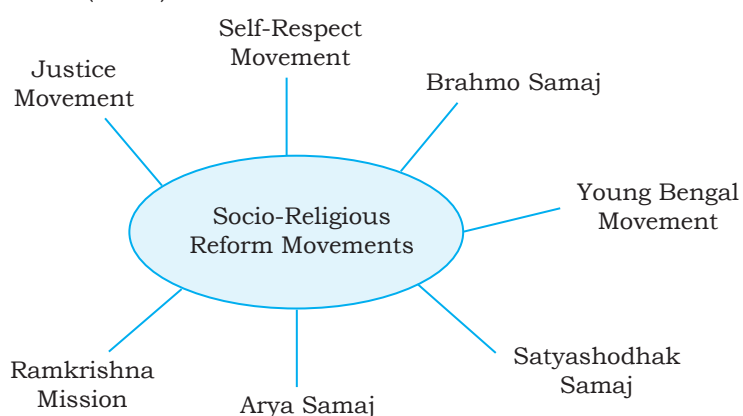
Tarabai Shinde, *Stripurushtulna*



- ❖ By the end of the 19th century, women themselves were actively working for reform. They wrote books, edited magazines, founded schools and training centers, and set up women's associations.
- ❖ From the early 20th century, they also formed political pressure groups to push through laws for female suffrage and better health care and education for women.
- ❖ Some of them joined various kinds of nationalist and socialist movements. Leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose lent their support to demands for greater equality and freedom for women. Nationalist leaders promised that there would be full suffrage for all men and women after Independence.

### Caste and Social Reform

- ❖ Some social reformers also criticised caste inequalities. For instance **Rajaram Mohan Roy** translated an old Buddhist text that was critical of caste; The **Prarthana Samaj** adhered to the tradition of Bhakti that believed in spiritual equality of all castes; In Bombay, the **Paramhans Mandali** was founded (1840) to work for the abolition of caste.



- ❖ Many of these reformers and members of reform associations were people of upper castes who would violate caste taboos on food and touch, in an effort to get rid of the hold of caste prejudice in their lives. They also questioned the injustices of the caste social order.
- ❖ During the 19th century, Christian missionaries began setting up schools for tribal groups and “lower” caste children. On one hand, these children were equipped with some resources to make their way into a changing world but on the other, the poor began leaving their villages to look for jobs in the factories and in municipalities. Some also went to work in plantations in Assam, Mauritius, Trinidad and Indonesia.



Figure 5.2: Madigas-Leatherworker

Leatherworkers have been traditionally held in contempt since they work with dead animals which are seen as dirty and polluting. During the 1st World War, however, there was a huge demand for shoes for the armies. Caste prejudice against leather workers and shoemakers existed who were ready to supply leather shoes to army. So they could ask for high prices and gain impressive profits.

**Madigas** were one such untouchable caste of present-day **Andhra Pradesh** who were experts at cleaning hides, tanning them for use, and sewing sandals.

- ❖ The poor from the villages and small towns, many of them from low castes, began moving to the cities where there was a new demand for labour such as coolies, diggers, carriers, bricklayers, sewage cleaners, sweepers, palanquin bearers, rickshaw pullers etc.
- ❖ The army also offered opportunities as a number of **Mahar** people (regarded as untouchable), found jobs in the Mahar Regiment. The father of B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalit movement, taught at an army school.
- ❖ Work in the new locations was hard but the poor, the people from low castes, saw this as an opportunity to get away from the oppressive hold that upper-caste landowners exercised over their lives and the daily humiliation they suffered.

### Demands for Equality and Justice

- ❖ By the second half of the 19th century, people from within the Non-Brahman castes began organising movements against caste discrimination, and demanded social equality and justice.
- ❖ **Ghasidas** founded the **Satnami Movement** in Central India, worked among the leatherworkers to improve their social status.
- ❖ In eastern Bengal, **Haridas Thakur's Matua sect** worked among Chandala cultivators. Haridas questioned the caste system of Brahmanical texts.
- ❖ A guru from Ezhava caste, **Shri Narayana Guru**, proclaimed the ideals of unity for his people. He argued against treating people unequally on the basis of caste differences. According to him, all humankind belonged to the same caste. He stated: "**oru jati, oru matam, oru daivam manushyanu**" (one caste, one religion, one god for humankind).
- ❖ All these leaders from Non-Brahman castes tried to change those habits and practices which provoked the contempt of dominant castes and tried to create a sense of self-esteem among the subordinate castes.

#### No Place Inside the Classroom

In the Bombay Presidency, during 1829, untouchables were not allowed into even government schools. When some of them asked for that right, they were allowed to sit on the veranda outside the classroom, without "polluting" the room where upper-caste boys were taught.

### Jyotirao Phule and his Work

- ❖ A "Non-Brahmin caste" leader **Jyotirao Phule**, born in 1827, studied in schools set up by Christian missionaries.
- ❖ On growing up, he developed his own ideas about the injustices of caste society and set out to attack the Brahmins' claim that they were superior to others, since they were Aryans.
- ❖ He argued that the Aryans were foreigners and defeated and subjugated the true children of the country who had lived here from before the coming of the Aryans. As the Aryans established their dominance, they began looking at the defeated population as inferior, as low caste people.
- ❖ According to him, the "upper" castes had no right to their land and power. In reality, the land belonged to indigenous people, the so-called low castes.
- ❖ He claimed that before Aryan rule there existed a golden age when warrior-peasants tilled the land and ruled the Maratha countryside in just and fair ways.

#### Black Slaves and White Planters

From the time that European explorers and traders landed in Africa in the 17th century, a trade in slaves began. Black people were captured and brought from Africa to America, sold to white planters, and made to work on cotton and other plantations for long hours, typically from dawn to dusk, punished for "inefficient work", and whipped and tortured. Many people, white and black, opposed slavery through organised protest. In doing so, they invoked the spirit of the **American Revolution of 1776**.

**American Revolution of 1776, Exhorting:** In his moving Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln held that those who had fought slavery had done so for the cause of democracy. He urged the people to strive for racial equality so that "government of the people, shall not perish from the earth".

- ❖ He proposed that **Shudras (laboring castes) and Ati Shudras (untouchables)** should unite to challenge caste discrimination.
- ❖ He founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj** to propagate caste equality.
- ❖ In 1873, he wrote a book named **Gulamgiri**, meaning slavery and dedicated to all those Americans who had fought to free slaves during the American Civil War, thus establishing a link between the conditions of the “lower” castes in India and the black slaves in America.
- ❖ He extended his criticism of the caste system to argue against all forms of inequality such as the condition of “upper”-caste women, the miseries of the laborer, and the humiliation of the “low” castes.

The movement for caste reform continued in the 20th century by other great dalit leaders like **Dr B.R. Ambedkar** in western India and **E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker** in the south.

### Temple Entry

- ❖ **Ambedkar** was born into a Mahar family. As a child he experienced caste prejudice. In school he was forced to sit outside the classroom on the ground, and was not allowed to drink water from taps that upper caste children used.
- ❖ After finishing school, he got a fellowship to go to the US for higher studies. On his return to India in 1919, he wrote about “upper” caste power in contemporary society.
- ❖ Brahman priests were outraged when the Dalits used water from the temple tank.
- ❖ In 1927, he started a **temple entry movement** and led three such movements between 1927 and 1935.
- ❖ His aim was to make everyone see the power of caste prejudices within society.

### The Non-Brahman Movement

- ❖ The non-Brahman movement was initiated in the early 20th century by those who had acquired access to education, wealth and influence.
- ❖ They argued that Brahmans were heirs of Aryan invaders from the north who had conquered southern lands from the indigenous Dravidian races. They challenged Brahmanical claims to power.
- ❖ **E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, or Periyar**, had been an ascetic in his early life and had studied Sanskrit scriptures. Later, he became a member of the Congress, only to leave it in disgust when he found that at a feast organised by nationalists, the lower castes were made to sit at a distance from the upper castes.

#### “Me Here and You Over There”

Phule was also critical of the anti-colonial nationalism that was preached by upper-caste leaders. He wrote:

The Brahmans have hidden away the sword of their religion which has cut the throat of the peoples’ prosperity and now go about posing as great patriots of their country. They ... give this advice to ... our Shudra, Muslim and Parsi youth that unless we put away all quarrelling amongst ourselves about the divisions between high and low in our country and come together, our ... country will never make any progress ... It will be unity to serve their purposes, and then it will be me here and you over there again.

*Jyotiba Phule, The Cultivator’s Whipcord*

#### POINTS TO PONDER

What do you think Jyotirao Phule meant by “me here and you over there again”?



#### “We are also human beings”

In 1927, Ambedkar said:

We now want to go to the Tank only to prove that like others, we are also human beings ... Hindu society should be reorganised on two main principles – equality and absence of casteism.

#### Periyar on Women

Periyar wrote:

Only with the arrival of words such as Thara Mukurtham our women had become puppets in the hands of their husbands... we ended up with such fathers who advise their daughters ... that they had been gifted away to their husbands and they belong to their husband’s place. This is the .... result of out association with Sanskrit.

*Periyar, cited in Periyar Chintahnaikal*

- ✧ Periyar founded the **Self Respect Movement** to fight for the dignity of untouchables.
- ✧ He argued that untouchables were the true upholders of an original Tamil and Dravidian culture which had been subjugated by Brahmins.
- ✧ According to him, all religious authorities saw social divisions and inequality as God-given. Therefore, untouchables had to free themselves in order to achieve social equality.
- ✧ He was an outspoken critic of Hindu scriptures, specially the **Codes of Manu (the ancient lawgiver), the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana** by saying that these texts had been used to establish the authority of Brahmins over lower castes and the domination of men over women.
- ❖ The movements of lower caste leaders did lead to rethinking and some self criticism among upper-caste nationalist leaders. But orthodox Hindu society reacted by founding **Sanatan Dharma Sabhas** and the **Bharat Dharma Mahamandal** in the north, and the **Brahman Sabha** in Bengal with the objective to uphold caste distinctions as a cornerstone of Hinduism, and show how this was sanctified by scriptures.

#### POINTS TO PONDER

Why does caste remain such a controversial issue today? What do you think was the most important movement against caste in colonial times?



### Other Important Reform Movements

**The Brahmo Samaj:** Formed in August, 1828, prohibited all forms of idolatry and sacrifice, believed in the Upanishads, and forbade its members from criticising other religious practices. It critically drew upon the ideals of religions especially of Hinduism and Christianity – looking at their negative and positive dimensions. Keshub Chandra sen was one of the leader.

**Derozio and Young Bengal Movement:** Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, a teacher at Hindu College, Calcutta, in the 1820s, promoted radical ideas and encouraged his pupils to question all authority. His students attacked tradition and custom, demanded education for women and campaigned for the freedom of thought and expression.

**The Ramakrishna Mission and Swami Vivekananda:** Named after **Ramakrishna Paramhansa**, Swami Vivekananda's guru, the Ramakrishna Mission stressed the ideal of salvation through social service and selfless action. **Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), or Narendra Nath Dutta**, combined the simple teaching of Sri Ramakrishna with his well founded modern outlook and spread them all over the world. He gave speech in the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian in modern times, who re-established the spiritual pre-eminence of the **Vedanta philosophy** on a global scale. He firmly believed that any reform could become successful only by uplifting the condition of the masses. Therefore, his clarion call to the people of India was to rise above the narrow confines of their 'religion of the kitchen' and come together in the service of the nation. He was convinced that many of the problems facing the mankind could only be overcome if the nations of the world come together on an equal footing. Therefore, his exhortations to the youth was to unite on the basis of a common spiritual heritage.

**The Prathana Samaj:** Established in 1867 at Bombay, the Prathana Samaj sought to remove caste restriction, abolish child marriage, encourage the education of women, and end the ban on widow remarriage. Its religious meetings drew upon Hindu, Buddhist and Christian texts.

**The Veda Samaj:** Established in 1864 in Madras (Chennai), was inspired by the Brahmo Samaj. It worked to abolish caste distinctions and promote widow remarriage and women's education. Its members believed in one God. They condemned the superstitions and rituals of orthodox Hinduism.

**The Aligarh Movement:** The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, founded by **Sayyid Ahmed Khan** in 1875 at Aligarh, later became the Aligarh Muslim University. The institution offered modern education, including Western science, to Muslims. The Aligarh Movement, had an enormous impact in the area of educational reform.

**The Singh Sabha Movement:** Reform organisations of the Sikhs, the first Singh Sabha were formed at Amritsar in 1873 and at Lahore in 1879. The Sabhas sought to rid Sikhism of superstitions, caste distinctions practices seen by them as non-Sikh. They promoted education among the Sikhs, other combining modern instruction with Sikh teachings.



## Conclusion

Women have been restricted to domestic work for the last 200 years. They were deprived of many rights such as education, vote etc. After so many efforts by the reformists, they got their basic rights. In fact, the cruel practice of sati was banned and widows were allowed to remarry. Apart from this leaders from lower castes also criticised caste prejudice by forceful speeches, writings and various movements to fight for their dignity and to achieve equal status in the society. Debates and struggles over caste continued beyond the colonial period and are still going on.

Timeline	Event
1828	Brahmo Samaj
1840	Paramhans Mandali
1864	Veda Samaj
1867	Prathana Samaj
1873	Satyashodhak Samaj
1875	Hindu Mahila Vidyalaya
1927	Temple Entry Movement
1929	Child Marriage Restraint Act

### Glossary

- **Brahmo Samaj:** A community of men who have knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate reality.
- **Arya Samaj:** A monotheistic hindu reform movement that promotes values and practices based on infallible authority of Vedas.
- **Aristocrat:** A member of the highest social class, often with a special title.
- **Chandala:** Someone who deals with disposal of corpses.
- **Aryan:** A term usually used as ethnocultural self-designation by Indo-Iranians in ancient times.
- **Dravidian:** A linguistic and cultural group living primarily in Southern Asia.





# Indian National Movement and Mahatma Gandhi's Contribution

**Bibliography:** This Chapter encompasses a summary of **Chapter 8 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III) and **Theme eleven-XII** (Themes in Indian History-III).

## Introduction

The British conquered the territories and took over the kingdoms. They introduced new laws and various administrative institutions. Conquest of Britishers influenced the lives of peasants and tribals and also challenged the caste system and damaged the craft industry. This ultimately turned into revolt against British Rule and the Indian National Movement Started. The movement gave India many leaders but Gandhi ji was the most influential. In this chapter, we will look into the emergence of Nationalism and the mass participation. Further, this chapter analyses Gandhi ji's activities in India during 1915-1948 and his interactions with different sections of Indian society and the popular struggles that he inspired and led.

## The Emergence of Nationalism

- ❖ A realisation that India was the people of India – all the people irrespective of class, colour, caste, creed, language, or gender. And the country, its resources and systems, were meant for all of them.



- ❖ The consciousness that the British were exercising control over the resources of India and the lives of its people, and until this control was ended India could not be for Indians, began to be clearly stated by the political associations formed after 1850.
- ❖ Most of these associations were led by English-educated professionals such as lawyers. The more important ones were the **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha** (literal meaning of “sarvajanik” is “of or for all the people” (sarva = all + janik = of the people), **the Indian Association**, **the Madras**



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**Mahajan Sabha, the Bombay Presidency Association,** and of course the **Indian National Congress**.

- ❖ Though many of these associations functioned in specific parts of the country, their goals were stated as the **goals of all the people of India**, not those of any one region, community or class.
- ❖ They worked with the idea that the people should be **sovereign** (a modern consciousness and a key feature of nationalism) and that the people of India should be empowered to take decisions regarding their affairs.
- ❖ **The dissatisfaction with British rule (1870s-1880s):**
  - ❖ **The Arms Act of 1878:** This act disallowed Indians from possessing arms.
  - ❖ **The Vernacular Press Act 1878:** The act was enacted in an effort to silence those who were critical of the government. The Act allowed the government to confiscate the assets of newspapers including their printing presses if the newspapers published anything that was found “objectionable”.
  - ❖ **The Ilbert Bill, 1883:** The bill provided for the trial of European persons by Indians, and sought equality between British and Indian judges in the country. But when white opposed the bill and forced the government to withdraw the bill, Indians were enraged. The event highlighted the racial attitudes of the British in India. The Ilbert Bill controversy deepened the desire for an all-India organisation of educated Indians.
- ❖ **Formation of the Indian National Congress (INC), 1885:** It was established when 72 delegates from all over the country met at Bombay in December 1885. Leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C. Bonnerji, Surendranath Banerji, Romesh Chandra Dutt, S. Subramania Iyer, were largely from Bombay and Calcutta.
  - ❖ **Naoroji**, a businessman and **publicist** settled in London, and for a time member of the British Parliament, guided the younger nationalists.
  - ❖ A retired British official, **A.O. Hume** also contributed in bringing Indians from the various regions together.

**Who did the Congress seek to speak for?**

A newspaper, The Indian Mirror, wrote in January 1886:

The **First National Congress at Bombay** ... is the nucleus of a future Parliament for our country, and will lead to the good of inconceivable magnitude for our countrymen.

**Badruddin Tyabji** addressed the Congress as **President in 1887** thus: this Congress is composed of the representatives, not of any one class or community of India, but of all the different communities of India.

**Dadabhai Naoroji's book Poverty and Un-British Rule in India** offered a scathing criticism of the economic impact of British rule.

**A Nation in the Making**

- ❖ The Congress in the first twenty years was “**moderate**” in its objectives and methods.
- ❖ It demanded a greater voice for Indians in the government and in administration.
- ❖ It wanted the **Legislative Councils** to be made more representative, given more power, and introduced in provinces where none existed.
- ❖ It called for **civil service examinations to be held in India** as well, not just in London to place Indians in high positions.
- ❖ **Indianisation of administration** was part of a movement against racism, since important jobs at the time were monopolised by white officials, and it was assumed that Indians could not be given positions of responsibility. It was hoped that Indianisation would also reduce the drain of wealth to England.

- ❖ Early Congress also demanded the **separation of the judiciary from the executive**, the **repeal of the Arms Act**, the **freedom of speech and expression** and raised a number of economic issues.
- ❖ It also declared that increase in the land revenue had impoverished peasants and zamindars, and exports of grains to Europe had created food shortages.
- ❖ The **Congress demanded reduction of revenue**, cut in military expenditure, and more funds for irrigation and also passed resolutions on the salt tax, treatment of Indian labourers abroad, and the sufferings of forest dwellers – caused by an interfering forest administration.
- ❖ All this shows that despite being a body of the educated elite, they wanted to develop public awareness about the unjust nature of British rule.
- ❖ They published newspapers, wrote articles, and showed how British rule was leading to the economic ruin of the country. They even criticised British rule in their speeches and sent representatives to different parts of the country to mobilise public opinion.
- ❖ They felt that the British had respect for the ideals of freedom and justice, and so they would accept the just demands of Indians.

### Radicals and the Swadeshi Movements

- ❖ By the 1890s, in Bengal, Maharashtra and Punjab, leaders such as **Lala Lajpat Rai**, **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** and **Bipin Chandra Pal** (Lal Bal Pal) were beginning to explore more radical objectives and methods.
- ❖ They criticised the Moderates for their “**politics of prayers**”, and emphasised the importance of self-reliance and constructive work.
- ❖ They argued that people must rely on their own strength, not on the “good” intentions of the government; people must fight for swaraj. Thus, Tilak raised the slogan, “**Freedom is my birthright and I shall have it!**”

**Kesari**, a Marathi newspaper, edited by **Balgangadhar Tilak** became one of the strongest critics of British rule

### Partition of Bengal, 1905

- ❖ **Viceroy Curzon** partitioned Bengal (included Bihar and parts of Orissa) and argued for dividing Bengal for reasons of administrative convenience.
- ❖ It was clear that the partition was closely tied to the interests of British officials and businessmen. Even so, instead of removing the non-Bengali areas from the province, the government separated East Bengal and merged it with Assam.
- ❖ Perhaps the main motives were to curtail the influence of Bengali politicians and to split the Bengali people.
- ❖ The partition of Bengal infuriated people all over India even all the sections of Congress - **the Moderates and the Radicals**, opposed it.
- ❖ Large public meetings and demonstrations were organised and novel methods of mass protest developed came to be known as the **Swadeshi movement**.
- ❖ The movement was strongest in Bengal but with echoes elsewhere too – in deltaic Andhra for instance, it was known as the **Vandemataram Movement**.
- ❖ The movement sought to oppose British rule and encourage the ideas of self-help, swadeshi enterprise, national education, and use of Indian languages.
- ❖ To fight for swaraj, the radicals advocated mass mobilisation and boycott of British institutions and goods.
- ❖ Some individuals also suggested “**revolutionary violence**” - necessary to overthrow British rule.

#### Lala Lajpat Rai

A nationalist from Punjab, he was one of the leading members of the Radical group which was critical of the politics of petitions. He was also an **active member of the Arya Samaj**.



**All India Muslim League:**

- ❖ The **All India Muslim League formed at Dacca in 1906** by a group of Muslim landlords and nawabs supported the partition of Bengal. It desired separate electorates for Muslims, which was introduced in 1909 for the first time. Some seats in the **councils** were now reserved for Muslims who would be elected by Muslim voters. This tempted politicians to gather a following by distributing favours to their own religious groups.

**Congress Split and Reunion:**

- ❖ Meanwhile, the **Congress split in 1907**. The Moderates were opposed to the use of boycott and extremists wanted to reiterate swadeshi and boycott.
- ❖ After the split the Moderates with Tilak's followers functioning from outside dominated the Congress.
- ❖ The two groups **reunited in December 1915**.

**Lucknow Pact:**

- ❖ In 1916, the Congress and the Muslim League signed the **Lucknow Pact** and decided to work together for representative government in the country.

**The Growth of Mass Nationalism**

- ❖ The **First World War** altered the economic and political situation in India. It led to a **huge rise in the defence expenditure** and the government in turn increased taxes on individual incomes and business profits.
- ❖ **Increased military expenditure** and the demands for war supplies led to a sharp rise in prices which created great difficulties for the common people. On the other hand, business groups reaped fabulous profits from the war as it created a demand for industrial goods (jute bags, cloth, rails) and caused a decline of imports from other countries into India.
- ❖ So Indian industries expanded during the war, and Indian business groups began to demand greater opportunities for development.
- ❖ The war also led the British to expand their army and villages were pressured to supply soldiers for an alien cause. A large number of soldiers were sent to serve abroad.
- ❖ Many returned after the war with an understanding that imperialist powers were exploiting the peoples of Asia and Africa.
- ❖ Furthermore, **the Russian Revolution (1917)**, spread the news about peasants' and workers' struggles and ideas of socialism widely, inspiring Indian nationalists.
- ❖ Thus, after 1919 the struggle against British rule gradually became a mass movement, involving peasants, tribals, students, women and occasionally factory workers as well. Certain business groups too began to actively support the Congress in the 1920s.

**The Advent of Mahatma Gandhi****Background:**

- ❖ In the history of nationalism a single individual is often identified with the making of a nation. For example, **Garibaldi** - in the making of Italy; **George Washington** - the American War of Independence; and **Ho Chi Minh** - the struggle to free Vietnam from colonial rule. In the same manner, Mahatma Gandhi has been regarded as the **'Father' of the Indian nation**.

In 1895, along with other Indians, **Mahatma Gandhi established the Natal Congress** to fight against racial discrimination.



- ❖ However, like Washington or Ho Chi-Minh, Mahatma Gandhi's political career was shaped and constrained by the society in which he lived.
- ❖ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, aged 46, arrived in India in January 1915 from South Africa.

### Work in South Africa:

- ❖ He went to South Africa as a lawyer, and in time became a leader of the Indian community in that territory. Having led Indians in that country in non-violent marches known as **satyagraha** against racist restrictions, he was already a respected leader, known internationally. As the historian **Chandran Devanesan** has remarked, **South Africa was "the making of the Mahatma"**.
- ❖ His South African campaigns had brought him in contact with various types of Indians: Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians; Gujaratis, Tamils and north Indians; and upper-class merchants, lawyers and workers.

### Early Phase in India:

- ❖ The India that Gandhi came back to in 1915 was rather different from the one that he had left in 1893. It was far more active politically.
- ❖ The INC now had branches in most major cities and towns and the Swadeshi movement of 1905-07 had greatly broadened its appeal among the middle classes.
- ❖ The leaders like "Lal, Bal and Pal", advocated militant opposition to colonial rule, there was a group of "Moderates" who preferred a more gradual and persuasive approach.
- ❖ Among these Moderates was Gandhi ji's acknowledged **political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale**, as well as Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who, like Gandhi ji, was a lawyer of Gujarati extraction trained in London.
- ❖ On Gokhale's advice, Mahatma Gandhi spent his first year in India travelling throughout the country, getting to know the land and its peoples, their needs and the overall situation.

### Gandhi ji's First Major Public Appearance:

- ❖ His first major public appearance was at the opening of the **Banaras Hindu University (BHU) in February 1916** who was invited on account of his work in South Africa.
- ❖ Among the invitees to this event were the princes and philanthropists whose donations had contributed to the founding of the BHU. Leaders of the Congress, such as **Annie Besant**, were also present.
- ❖ The opening of the BHU, Gandhi ji charged the Indian elite with a lack of concern for the labouring poor.
- ❖ Gandhi ji told the privileged invitees that "there is no salvation for India unless you strip yourself of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India". "There can be no spirit of self-government about us," he went on, "if we take away or allow others to take away from the peasants almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it."
- ❖ Gandhi ji's speech at Banaras was, at one level, merely a statement of fact – namely, that Indian nationalism was an elite phenomenon, a creation of lawyers and doctors and landlords. But, at another level, it was also a statement of intent – the first public announcement of Gandhi ji's own desire to make Indian nationalism more properly representative of the Indian people as a whole.

### Gandhi ji's Early Movements:

- ❖ At the annual Congress, held in Lucknow in December 1916, he was approached by a peasant from **Champaran** in Bihar, who told him about the harsh treatment of peasants by British



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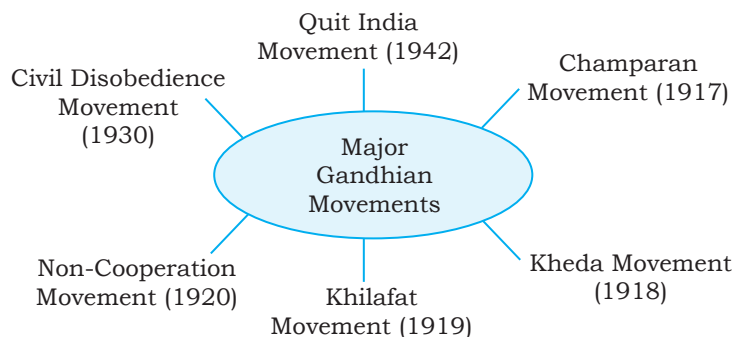
indigo planters. Mahatma Gandhi spent much of 1917, seeking to obtain for the peasants security of tenure as well as the freedom to cultivate the crops of their choice.

- ❖ Later interventions were in local movements in **Kheda and Ahmedabad** where he came into contact with **Rajendra Prasad and Vallabhbhai Patel**. In Ahmedabad, he intervened in a labour dispute, demanding better working conditions for the textile mill workers and led a successful **millworkers' strike in 1918**. Then he joined peasants in Kheda in asking the state for the remission of taxes following the failure of their harvest.
- ❖ These initiatives in Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda marked Gandhi ji out as a nationalist with a deep sympathy for the poor.

### Movements between 1919-1922:

#### The Rowlatt Satyagraha:

- ❖ During the **Great War of 1914-18**, the British had instituted censorship of the press and permitted detention without trial. Now, on the recommendation of a committee chaired by **Sir Sidney Rowlatt**, these tough measures were continued. In response, Gandhi ji called for a countrywide satyagraha against the "Rowlatt Act".
- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and others criticised the Act, calling it "**devilish**" and tyrannical.
- ❖ Gandhi ji asked the people to observe **6 April 1919** as a **day of non-violent opposition** to this Act, as a day of "humiliation and prayer" and hartal (strike) and **Satyagraha Sabhas** were set up to launch the movement.



- ❖ In towns across North and West India, shops were shut down and schools were closed in response to the *bandh* call. The Rowlatt Satyagraha turned out to be the **first all-India struggle** against the British government although it was largely restricted to cities.
- ❖ The protests were particularly intense in the Punjab, where many men had served on the British side in the War—expecting to be rewarded for their service. Gandhi ji and other prominent local Congressmen were arrested.
- ❖ The situation in the province grew progressively more tense, reaching a bloody climax in Amritsar in 13 April 1919, when a British Brigadier ordered his troops to open fire on a nationalist meeting. More than four hundred people were killed in what is known as the **Jallianwala Bagh massacre**.
- ❖ On learning about the massacre, Rabindranath Tagore expressed the pain and anger of the country by renouncing his **knighthood**.
- ❖ During the Satyagraha, the participants tried to ensure that Hindus and Muslims were united in the fight against British rule. This was also the call of Mahatma Gandhi. He was keen that Hindus and Muslims support each other in any just cause.
- ❖ It was the Rowlatt satyagraha that made Gandhi ji a truly national leader.

## Khilafat Agitation and the Non-Cooperation Movement:

- ❖ Emboldened by the success of Rowlatt Satyagraha, Gandhi ji called for a campaign of “non-cooperation” with British rule.
- ❖ Indians who wished colonialism to end were asked to stop attending schools, colleges and law courts, and not pay taxes. If non cooperation was effectively carried out, said Gandhi ji, India would win swaraj within a year.
- ❖ To further broaden the struggle he had **joined hands with the Khilafat Movement** that sought to restore the Caliphate, a symbol of Pan-Islamism which had been abolished by the Turkish ruler Kemal Attaturk in 1920.
- ❖ Gandhi ji urged the Congress to campaign against “Punjab wrongs” (Jallianwala massacre), the Khilafat wrong and demand swaraj.
- ❖ Gandhi ji hoped that by coupling non-cooperation with Khilafat, India's two major religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, could collectively bring an end to colonial rule.
- ❖ Thousands of students left government controlled schools and colleges. Many lawyers such as **Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, C. Rajagopalachari and Asaf Ali** gave up their practices. British titles were surrendered and legislators boycotted. People lit public bonfires of foreign cloth.
- ❖ The imports of foreign cloth fell drastically between 1920 and 1922.
- ❖ Hill tribes in northern Andhra violated the forest laws, farmers in Awadh refused paying taxes, peasants in Kumaun refused to carry loads for colonial officials. Peasants, workers, and others interpreted and acted upon the call to “non-cooperate” with colonial rule in ways that best suited their interests, rather than conform to the dictates laid down from above.
- ❖ As a consequence of the Non-Cooperation Movement the British Raj was shaken to its foundations for the first time since the Revolt of 1857.
- ❖ On 4 February, 1922 a group of peasants attacked and torched a police station, killing several constables in the hamlet of **Chauri Chaura**, in the United Provinces (now, UP and Uttaranchal).
- ❖ This act of violence prompted Gandhi ji to call off the movement altogether. **“No provocation”, he insisted, “can possibly justify (the) brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and who had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob”.**
- ❖ During the movement thousands of Indians were put in jail. Gandhi ji himself was arrested in March 1922, and charged with sedition.
- ❖ Justice **C.N. Broomfield** presided over his trial.

### Khilafat Movement

The Khilafat Movement (1919-1920) was a movement of Indian Muslims, led by **Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali**, that demanded the following:

- The Turkish Sultan or Khalifa must retain control over the Muslim sacred places in the erstwhile Ottoman empire;
- The **jazirat-ul-Arab** (Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Palestine) must remain under Muslim sovereignty; and
- The Khalifa must be left with sufficient territory to enable him to defend the Islamic faith.

The Congress supported the movement and Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it to the Non-cooperation Movement.

Mahatma Gandhi's American biographer **Louis Fischer** wrote: “Non-cooperation”, “became the name of an epoch in the life of India and of Gandhiji. Non-cooperation was negative enough to be peaceful but positive enough to be effective. It entailed denial, renunciation, and self-discipline. It was training for self-rule.”

## People's Initiative during Non cooperation movement:

- ❖ In many cases people resisted British rule non-violently. In others, different classes and groups, interpreting Gandhi ji's call in their own manner, protested in ways that were not in accordance with his ideas. In either case, people linked their movements to local grievances.



- ❖ In **Kheda, Gujarat, Patidar peasants** organised nonviolent campaigns against the high land revenue demand of the British.
- ❖ In coastal **Andhra and interior Tamil Nadu**, liquor shops were **picketed**.
- ❖ In the **Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh**, tribals and poor peasants staged a number of “forest satyagrahas”, sometimes sending their cattle into forests without paying grazing fees because the colonial state had restricted their use of forest resources in various ways. They believed that Gandhi ji would get their taxes reduced and have the forest regulations abolished. In many forest villages, peasants proclaimed swaraj and believed that “**Gandhi Raj**” was about to be established.
- ❖ In **Sind** (now in Pakistan), Muslim traders and peasants were very enthusiastic about the Khilafat call.
- ❖ In **Bengal** too, the Khilafat-Non-Cooperation alliance gave enormous communal unity and strength to the national movement.
- ❖ In **Punjab**, the Akali agitation of the Sikhs sought to remove corrupt mahants – supported by the British – from their gurdwaras.
- ❖ Peasants of **Pratapgarh** in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) managed to stop **illegal eviction** of tenants; but they felt it was Gandhi ji who had won this demand for them.
- ❖ In **Assam**, tea garden labourers, shouting “Gandhi Maharaj ki Jai”, demanded a big increase in their wages and left the British-owned plantations amidst declarations that they were following Gandhi ji’s wish.
- ❖ In the Assamese Vaishnava songs of the period the reference to Krishna was substituted by “**Gandhi Raja**”.

### The Eternal Law of Suffering

What did Mahatma Gandhi mean by *ahimsa* (non-violence)? How could *ahimsa* become the basis of struggle? This is what Gandhiji said: Non-violence comes to us through doing good continually without the slightest expectation of return. ... That is the indispensable lesson in non-violence ... In South Africa ... I succeeded in learning the eternal law of suffering as the only remedy for undoing wrong and injustice. It means positively the law of non-violence. You have to be prepared to suffer cheerfully at the hands of all and sundry and you will wish ill to no one, not even to those who may have wronged you.

*Mahatma Gandhi, 12 March 1938*

### Gandhi Ji: A People’s Leader

- ❖ **Leader of the Masses:** By 1922, Gandhi ji had transformed Indian nationalism; it was no longer a movement of professionals and intellectuals; now, hundreds of thousands of peasants, workers and artisans also participated in the movement.
- ❖ **Relatable Appearance:** Many of them venerated Gandhi ji, referring to him as their “**Mahatma**”. They appreciated the fact that he dressed like them - **dhoti or loincloth**, lived like them, and spoke their language.
  - ✧ Unlike other leaders, he did not stand apart from the common folk, but empathised and even identified with them. Other nationalist leaders dressed formally, wearing a Western suit or an Indian bandgala.
- ❖ **Use of Charkha:** Meanwhile, he spent part of each day working on the **charkha (spinning wheel)**, and encouraged other nationalists to do likewise.

### Charkha

Mahatma Gandhi with the charkha has become the most abiding image of Indian nationalism.

In 1921, during a tour of South India, Gandhiji shaved his head and began wearing a loincloth in order to identify with the poor. His new appearance also came to symbolise asceticism and abstinence – qualities he celebrated in opposition to the consumerist culture of the modern world.

Mahatma Gandhi was profoundly critical of the modern age in which machines enslaved humans and displaced labour. He saw the charkha as a symbol of a human society that would not glorify machines and technology. The spinning wheel, moreover, could provide the poor with supplementary income and make them self-reliant.

- ✧ The act of spinning allowed him to break the boundaries that prevailed within the traditional caste system, between mental labour and manual labour.
- ❖ **Popular Perception:** In a fascinating study, the historian **Shahid Amin** has traced the image of Mahatma Gandhi among the peasants of eastern Uttar Pradesh, as conveyed by reports and rumours in the local press.
  - ✧ When he travelled through the region in February 1921, Gandhi ji was received by adoring crowds everywhere.
  - ✧ Wherever Gandhi ji went, rumours spread of his miraculous powers.
  - ✧ In some places it was said that he had been sent by the King to redress the grievances of the farmers, and that he had the power to overrule all local officials.
  - ✧ In other places it was claimed that Gandhi ji's power was superior to that of the English monarch, and that with his arrival the colonial rulers would flee the district.
  - ✧ There were also stories reporting dire consequences for those who opposed him.
- ❖ Known variously as **"Gandhi baba"**, **"Gandhi Maharaj"**, or simply as **"Mahatma"**, Gandhi ji appeared to the Indian peasants as a saviour, who would rescue them from high taxes and oppressive officials and restore dignity and autonomy to their lives.
- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi was **by caste a merchant, and by profession a lawyer**; but his simple lifestyle and love of working with his hands allowed him to empathise more fully with the labouring poor and for them, in turn, to empathise with him.
- ❖ **Importance to Organisation:** While Mahatma Gandhi's mass appeal was undoubtedly genuine, his success in broadening the basis of nationalism was based on careful organisation.
  - ✧ New branches of the Congress were set up in various parts of India and a series of **"Praja Mandals"** were established to promote the nationalist creed in the princely states.



**Figure 6.1: Representation of Mahatma Gandhi**

In popular images too Mahatma Gandhi is often shown as a divine being occupying a place within the pantheon of Indian gods. In this image, he is driving Krishna's chariot, guiding other nationalist leaders in the battle against the British.

- ❖ **Importance to the Mother Tongue:** Gandhi ji encouraged the communication of the nationalist message in the mother tongue. Thus the provincial committees of the Congress were based on linguistic regions, rather than on the artificial boundaries of British India.

- ❖ **Increasing Followers of Gandhi Ji:** While Mahatma Gandhi's own role was vital, the growth of what we might call "Gandhian nationalism" also depended to a very substantial extent on his followers.

- ❖ Between 1917 and 1922, a group of highly talented Indians - Mahadev Desai, Vallabh Bhai Patel, J.B. Kripalani, Subhash Chandra Bose, Abul Kalam Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Govind Ballabh Pant and C. Rajagopalachari attached themselves to Gandhi ji.
- ❖ These close associates of Gandhi ji came from different regions as well as different religious traditions which in turn, inspired countless other Indians to join the Congress and work for it.

#### POINTS TO PONDER

You have read about rumours and seen that the circulation of rumours tells us about the structure of the belief of a time: they tell us about the mind of the people who believe in the rumours and the circumstances that make this belief possible. What do you think these rumours about Gandhiji reflect?



- ❖ **Promotion of Khadi:** Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison in February 1924, and now chose to devote his attention to the promotion of home-spun cloth (khadi) and the abolition of untouchability.
- ❖ **Gandhi ji as a Socio-Economic Reformer:** He believed that in order to be worthy of freedom, Indians had to get rid of social evils such as child marriage and untouchability.
  - ❖ Indians of one faith had also to cultivate a genuine tolerance for Indians of another faith – hence his emphasis on Hindu-Muslim harmony.
  - ❖ Meanwhile, on the economic front Indians had to learn to become self-reliant – hence his stress on the significance of wearing *khadi* rather than mill-made cloth imported from overseas.
  - ❖ Prosperous businessmen and industrialists were quick to recognise that, in a free India, the favours enjoyed by their British competitors would come to an end. Some of these entrepreneurs, such as **G.D. Birla**, supported the national movement openly.

### The Happenings of 1922-1929

- ❖ **Chauri Chaura Incident:** In February 1922, Gandhi Ji abruptly called off the Non-Cooperation Movement after the violent Chauri Chaura incident, where twenty-two policemen were killed during a peaceful peasant demonstration in response to police firing. Post this movement, Gandhi's followers stressed the need for constructive work in rural areas.



Figure 6.2: Bhagat Singh

**Do You know:** Revolutionary nationalists such as Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Sukhdev and others wanted to fight against the colonial rule and the rich exploiting classes through a revolution of workers and peasants. For this purpose, they founded the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in 1928** at Ferozeshah Kotla in Delhi.

- On 17 December, 1928, Bhagat Singh, Azad and Rajguru **assassinated Saunders**, a police officer who was involved in the lathi-charge that had caused the death of Lala Lajpat Rai.
- On 8 April, 1929, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt threw a **bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly**. The aim, as their leaflet explained, was not to kill but "to make the deaf hear", and to remind the foreign government of its callous exploitation.
- **Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were executed on March 23, 1931. Bhagat Singh's age at that time was only 23.**

- ❖ **Question of Council Elections:** Leaders like **Chitta Ranjan Das and Motilal Nehru** proposed the party's involvement in council elections to influence government policies.
- ❖ In the mid-1920s, the Gandhians expanded their support base through social work, which proved crucial for launching the 1930 Civil Disobedience movement.
- ❖ During this period, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu organization, and the Communist Party of India were formed. Bhagat Singh, a revolutionary nationalist, was also active.
- ❖ In 1928, Gandhi Ji contemplated re-entering politics, albeit not directly participating in the campaign against the all-White Simon Commission, which aimed to investigate colonial conditions but endorsed it. He also lent support to a peasant satyagraha in Bardoli the same year.
- ❖ **Demand for Purna Swaraj:** The decade concluded in 1929 with the Congress's proclamation to strive for Purna Swaraj (complete independence) under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. This culminated in the celebration of "Independence Day" on 26 January 1930, marked by the hoisting of the national flag and the singing of patriotic songs nationwide.

### The Salt Satyagraha

- ❖ In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi initiated the Salt March to protest one of the most unpopular British Indian laws, which granted the British government a monopoly on salt production and sales.
- ❖ Gandhi Ji believed that taxing an essential like salt was unjust, uniting Indians against British rule. Although Gandhi Ji had informed Viceroy Lord Irwin about the march, the Viceroy failed to grasp its significance.



**Figure 6.3: Demonstrators oppose the Simon Commission**

In 1927, the British government in England decided to send a commission headed by Lord Simon to decide India's political future. The Commission had no Indian representative. The decision created an outrage in India. All political groups decided to boycott the Commission. When the Commission arrived, it was met with demonstrations with banners saying "Simon Go Back".



- ❖ On March 12, 1930, Gandhi Ji and his followers walked over 240 miles from Sabarmati to Dandi, a coastal town. There, they openly defied the law by collecting natural salt from the seashore and boiling seawater to make salt, garnering support from peasants, tribals, and women.

#### Ambabai From Karnataka

Women, young and old, single and married, rural and urban, from both conservative and liberal homes participated in the national movement. Their involvement was significant for the freedom struggle, for the women's movement, and for themselves personally. Both British officials and Indian nationalists felt that women's participation gave the national struggle an immense force. Participation in the freedom movement brought women out of their homes, gave them a place in the professions, in the governance of India, and it could pave the way for equality with men.

Ambabai of Karnataka had been married at age twelve. Widowed at sixteen, she picketed foreign cloth and liquor shops in Udipi. She was arrested, served a sentence and was rearrested. Between prison terms she made speeches, taught spinning, and organised **probhat pheris**. She regarded these as the happiest days of her life because they gave it a new purpose and commitment. Women, however, had to fight for their right to participate in the movement. During the Salt Satyagraha, for instance even Mahatma Gandhi was initially opposed to women's participation, **Sarojini Naidu** had to persuade him to allow women to join the movement.

- ❖ Meanwhile, parallel salt marches were being conducted in other parts of the country.
- ❖ The rulers responded by detaining the dissenters and in the wake of the Salt March, nearly 60,000 Indians were arrested, among them, of course, Gandhi ji himself.
- ❖ The progress of Gandhi ji's march to the seashore can be traced from the secret reports filed by the police officials. These reproduce the speeches he gave at the villages enroute, in which he called upon local officials to renounce government employment and join the freedom struggle.
  - ❖ In one village, **Wasna**, Gandhi ji told the upper castes that "if you are out for Swaraj you must serve untouchables. You won't get Swaraj merely by the repeal of the salt taxes or other taxes. For Swaraj you must make amends for the wrongs which you did to the untouchables. For Swaraj, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Sikhs will have to unite. These are the steps towards Swaraj."
- ❖ The police spies reported that Gandhi ji's meetings were very well attended, by villagers of all castes, and by women as well as men. Many were officials, who had resigned from their posts with the colonial government.
- ❖ **The Salt March was notable for at least three reasons:**
  1. It was this event that first brought Mahatma Gandhi to world attention. The march was widely covered by the European and American press.
  2. Women participated in large numbers. The socialist activist **Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay** had persuaded Gandhi ji not to restrict the protests to men alone. She herself was one of numerous women who courted arrest by breaking the salt or liquor laws.
  3. It was the Salt March which forced upon the British the realisation that their Raj would not last forever, and that they would have to devolve some power to the Indians.

Since the early 1920s, Sarojini Naidu was a significant leader of the Dandi March. She was the **first Indian woman to become President of the Indian National Congress** (1925).

#### POINTS TO PONDER

Why was salt destroyed by the colonial government? Why did Mahatma Gandhi consider the salt tax more oppressive than other taxes?



## Struggle After 1930

### Round Table Conferences and Gandhi-Irwin Pact:

- ❖ The British government convened a series of “Round Table Conferences” (RTC) in London.
  - ✧ **First Round Table Conference:** In November 1930, the first Round Table Conference (RTC) took place, but it lacked the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, rendering it largely ineffective.
  - ✧ **Gandhi-Irwin Pact:** Gandhi was released from jail in January 1931, and Congress leaders gathered in Allahabad. This led to the signing of the “Gandhi-Irwin Pact,” which called off civil disobedience, demanded prisoner releases, and allowed salt production along the coast. However, this pact faced criticism from radical nationalists for not securing a commitment to Indian political independence from Viceroy Irwin, only a promise of future talks.
  - ✧ **Second Round Table Conference:** A second RTC was held in late 1931, with Gandhi representing Congress. His claim that Congress represented all of India was challenged by the Muslim League, the Princes, and B.R. Ambedkar, representing various interests.
    - ❑ The conference remained inconclusive, prompting Gandhi to resume Civil Disobedience upon returning to India.
    - ❑ The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, had little sympathy for Gandhi's cause.

#### The problem with separate electorates

At the Round Table Conference Mahatma Gandhi stated his arguments against separate electorates for the Depressed Classes: Separate electorates to the “Untouchables” will ensure them bondage in perpetuity ... Do you want the “Untouchables” to remain “Untouchables” for ever? Well, the separate electorates would perpetuate the stigma. What is needed is destruction of “Untouchability”, and when you have done it, the barsinister, which has been imposed by an insolent “superior” class upon an “inferior” class will be destroyed. When you have destroyed the barsinister to whom will you give the separate electorates?

#### Veer Lakhan Nayak

Baji Mohammed, President of the Nabrangpur Congress, Orissa in the 1930s, reports:

On August 25, 1942 ... nineteen people died on the spot in police firing at Paparandi in Nabarangpur. Many died thereafter from their wounds. Over 300 were injured. More than a thousand were jailed in Koraput district. Several were shot or executed. Veer Lakhan Nayak (a legendary tribal leader who defied the British) was hanged.

Nayak, Baji tells us, was not worried about being executed, only sad that he would not live to see freedom's dawn.

Baji Mohammad mobilised 20,000 people to join the national struggle. He offered satyagraha many times over. He participated in protests against the Second World War and in the Quit India movement, and served long jail terms.

### Congress Governments:

- ❖ The Indian people's struggles saw results with the Government of India Act in 1935, which granted provincial autonomy and led to provincial legislature elections in 1937, resulting in Congress forming governments in seven out of eleven provinces.
  - ✧ In September 1939, World War II erupted, and Congress leaders were willing to support the British war effort in exchange for post-war independence, but the British declined.
  - ✧ In protest, Congress ministries resigned in October 1939. From 1940 to 1941, Congress organized individual satyagrahas to pressure the British for post-war freedom.

### Muslim League's Demand and British Attempt at Compromise:

- ❖ **Muslim League's Demand for Autonomy:** Meanwhile, in March 1940, the Muslim League demanded autonomy for Muslim-majority regions. The political landscape shifted to a three-way struggle between Congress, the Muslim League, and the British.

- ❖ **British Attempt at Compromise:** With an all-party government in Britain led by Winston Churchill in spring 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps was sent to India for compromise talks with Gandhi and Congress.
  - ❖ The talks failed as Congress insisted that the Viceroy should appoint an Indian as the Defense Member of his Executive Council if they were to support the British defense against the Axis powers.

#### Ambedkar On Separate Electorates

In response to Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to the demand for separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, Ambedkar wrote: Here is a class which is undoubtedly not in a position to sustain itself in the struggle for existence. The religion, to which they are tied, instead of providing them an honourable place, brands them as lepers, not fit for ordinary intercourse. Economically, it is a class entirely dependent upon the high-caste Hindus for earning its daily bread with no independent way of living open to it. Nor are all ways closed by reason of the social prejudices of the Hindus but there is a definite attempt all through our Hindu Society to bolt every possible door so as not to allow the Depressed Classes any opportunity to rise in the scale of life. In these circumstances, it would be granted by all fairminded persons that as the only path for a community so handicapped to succeed in the struggle for life against organised tyranny, some share of political power in order that it may protect itself is a paramount necessity ...

FROM DR BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR, "WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES", WRITINGS AND SPEECHES, VOL. 9, P. 312

#### Bose and The INA

A radical nationalist, with socialist leanings, Bose did not share Gandhi ji's ideal of *ahimsa*, though he respected him as the **"Father of the Nation"**. In January 1941, he secretly left his Calcutta home, went to Singapore, via Germany, and raised the **Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army (INA)**. To free India from British control, in 1944, the INA tried to enter India through Imphal and Kohima but the campaign failed. The INA members were imprisoned and tried. People across the country, from all walks of life, participated in the movement against the INA trials.

### Quit India and Later

- ❖ After the **failure of the Cripps Mission**, Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch his third major movement against British rule, the **"Quit India"** campaign, which began in August 1942.
- ❖ The British must quit India immediately, he told them. He gave the call, **"Do or Die"** in his speech on the 8th August 1942 at Gowalia Tank Maidan in Mumbai.
- ❖ Although Gandhi ji was jailed at once, younger activists organised strikes and acts of sabotage all over the country.
- ❖ Particularly active in the underground resistance were socialist members of the Congress, such as **Jayaprakash Narayan**.
- ❖ "Quit India" was genuinely a *mass* movement, bringing into its ambit hundreds of thousands of ordinary Indians. It specially attracted peasants and the youth who gave up their studies to join it. Communications and symbols of state authority were attacked all over the country and the British responded with severe repression.

#### Satara, 1943

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a non-Brahman movement, which opposed the caste system and landlordism, had developed in Maharashtra. This movement established links with the national movement by the 1930s. In 1943, some of the younger leaders in the Satara district of Maharashtra set up a parallel government (**prati sarkar**), with volunteer corps (**seba dals**) and village units (**tufan dals**). They ran people's courts and organised constructive work. Dominated by kunbi peasants and supported by dalits, the **Satara prati sarkar** functioned till the elections of 1946, despite government repression and, in the later stages, Congress disapproval.



- ❖ In several districts, such as Satara in the west and Medinipur in the east, “independent” governments were proclaimed.
- ❖ By the end of 1943 over 90,000 people were arrested, and around 1,000 killed in police firing. In many areas orders were given to machine-gun crowds from aeroplanes. The rebellion, however, ultimately brought the Raj to its knees.

### Towards Independence and Partition

- ❖ **Demand of Muslim League:** In 1940, the Muslim League had moved a resolution demanding “Independent States” for Muslims in the north-western and eastern areas of the country. The resolution did not mention partition or Pakistan.
- ❖ The League asked for an autonomous arrangement for the Muslims of the subcontinent because from the late 1930s, the League began viewing the Muslims as a separate “nation” from the Hindus.
- ❖ In developing this notion, it may have been influenced by the history of tension between some Hindu and Muslim groups in the 1920s and 1930s and more importantly, the result of provincial elections of 1937.
- ❖ It feared that Muslims may even go unrepresented. The Congress’s rejection of the League’s desire to form a joint Congress-League government in the United Provinces in 1937 also annoyed the League.
- ❖ **Failure of Congress:** The Congress’s failure to mobilise the Muslim masses in the 1930s allowed the League to widen its social support. However, while the Congress leaders languished in jail, Jinnah and his colleagues worked patiently at expanding their influence. It was in these years that the League began to make a mark in the Punjab and Sind, provinces where it had previously had scarcely any presence.
- ❖ In June 1944, with the end of the war in sight, Gandhi ji was released from prison and held a series of meetings with Jinnah, seeking to bridge the gap between the Congress and the League.

#### Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

The Pashtun leader from the North West Frontier Province.

Also known as Badshah Khan, he was the **founder of the Khudai Khidmatgars**, a powerful non-violent movement among the Pathans of his province. Badshah Khan was strongly **opposed to the Partition of India**. He criticised his Congress colleagues for agreeing to the 1947 division.

### Wavell Plan

- ❖ At the end of the war in 1945, a Labour government came to power in Britain and committed itself to granting independence to India. Meanwhile, back in India, the Viceroy, **Lord Wavell**, brought the Congress, the League, together for a series of talks but failed because the League saw itself as the sole spokesperson of India’s Muslims. The Congress could not accept this claim since a large number of Muslims still supported it.
- ❖ In 1946, elections to the provinces, the Congress did well in the “**General**” constituencies but the League’s success in the seats reserved for Muslims was spectacular. The political polarisation was complete. It persisted with its demand for “Pakistan”.

### Cabinet Mission

- ❖ In **March 1946** the British cabinet sent a three-member mission (generally called **Cabinet Mission**) to Delhi to examine this demand and to agree on a federal system that would keep India together as a loose confederation while allowing the provinces a degree of autonomy.
- ❖ But it could not get the Congress and the Muslim League to agree to specific details of the proposal. After the talks broke down, Jinnah called for a “**Direct Action Day**” on 16 August 1946.



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- ❖ On the designated day, riots broke out in Calcutta, lasting several days and resulting in the death of thousands of people. By March 1947 violence spread to Bihar, and then across the country to the United Provinces and the Punjab.
- ❖ Many hundred thousand people were killed and numerous women had to face untold brutalities during the partition. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes. Torn asunder from their homelands, they were reduced to being refugees in alien lands.

### Mountbatten Plan

- ❖ In February 1947, **Wavell** was replaced as Viceroy by **Lord Mountbatten** and Mountbatten called one last round of talks, but when these too proved inconclusive he announced that British India would be freed, but also divided.
- ❖ The formal transfer of power was fixed for 15 August. The day was celebrated with gusto in different parts of India. In Delhi, the President of the Constituent Assembly began the meeting by invoking the **Father of the Nation – Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**.

**Jawaharlal Nehru** was Gandhi ji's disciple, a Congress Socialist, and an internationalist. He was a leading architect of the national movement and of free India's economy and polity.

**Maulana Azad** was born in Mecca to a Bengali father and an Arab mother. Well-versed in many languages, Azad was a scholar of Islam and an exponent of the notion of **wahadat-i-deen**, the essential oneness of all religions. An active participant in Gandhian movements and a staunch advocate of Hindu Muslim unity, he was **opposed to Jinnah's two-nation theory**.

**Chakravarti Rajagopalachari** was a veteran nationalist and leader of the Salt Satyagraha in the south. He was popularly known as Rajaji, served as member of the Interim Government of 1946 and as **free India's first Indian Governor-General**.

**Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** played an important role in the negotiations for independence during 1945-47. He hailed from an impoverished peasant proprietor family of Nadiad, Gujarat. A foremost organiser of the freedom movement from 1918 onwards, Patel served as **President of the Congress in 1931**.

**Mohammad Ali Jinnah** was the **ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity** until 1920, he played an important role in the making of the Lucknow Pact. He reorganised the Muslim League after 1934, and became the major spokesperson for the demand for Pakistan.

### The Last Heroic Days

- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi was not present at the festivities in the capital on **15 August 1947**. He was in Calcutta and marked the day with a 24-hour fast.
- ❖ At the initiative of Gandhi ji and Nehru, the Congress now passed a resolution on **"the rights of minorities"**.
- ❖ The Congress had never accepted the **"two-nation theory"** but was forced against its will to accept Partition. It still believed that "India is a land of many religions and many races, and must remain so".
- ❖ Whatever be the situation in Pakistan, India would be **"a democratic secular State** where all citizens enjoy full rights and are equally entitled to the protection of the State, irrespective of the religion to which they belong". The Congress wished to "assure the minorities in India that it will continue to protect, to the best of its ability, their citizen rights against aggression".
- ❖ Many scholars have written of the months after Independence as being Gandhi ji's "finest hour". After working to bring peace to Bengal, Gandhi ji shifted to Delhi, from where he hoped to move on to the riot torn districts of Punjab. While in the capital, his meetings were disrupted by refugees who objected to readings from the Koran, or shouted slogans asking why he did not speak of the sufferings of those Hindus and Sikhs still living in Pakistan.
- ❖ On 26 January, he spoke at his prayer meeting of how that day had been celebrated in the past as Independence Day. Now freedom had come, but its first few months had been deeply

disillusioning. However, he trusted that “the worst is over”, that Indians would henceforth work collectively for the “equality of all classes and creeds, never the domination and superiority of the major community over a minor, however insignificant it may be in numbers or influence”.

- ❖ He also permitted himself the hope “that though geographically and politically India is divided into two, at heart we shall ever be friends and brothers helping and respecting one another and be one for the outside world”.

### Gandhi's Death

- ❖ At his daily prayer meeting on the evening of 30 January, **Gandhi ji was shot dead** by a young man named **Nathuram Godse**.
- ❖ Gandhi ji's death led to an extraordinary outpouring of grief, with rich tributes being paid to him from across the political spectrum in India, and moving appreciations coming from such international figures as George Orwell and Albert Einstein. *Times* magazine, which had once mocked his physical size and seemingly non-rational ideas, now compared his martyrdom to that of Abraham Lincoln.

#### Nationalism in Africa: The case of Ghana

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the rise of nationalism in many Afro-Asian countries. In many of these, nationalism arose as a part of the anti-colonial struggles for independence. Colonial rule in Africa was dictatorial. Only the “Chiefs” were allowed to rule on behalf of the foreign powers. Alternately, laws affecting Africans were created in all-white legislatures. Africans had no decision-making powers or representation, not until after the 2nd World War at least. The forcible takeover of land from local owners or users, increased taxation and poor working conditions led to many African protests. **In 1957, Ghana, known until then as the Gold Coast, became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence.** The freedom movement was led by Kwame Nkrumah's Convention People's Party through strikes, boycotts and mass rallies. In 1951 this party won a huge electoral victory. It opposed the existing system in which the British rulers had allowed the Chiefs to nominate representatives to the legislature. It pressed the British to grant a legislature that contained no nominated or special members and won this demand in 1954. Elections to the new Legislative Council were held in 1956. The Convention People's Party won these, thus paving the way for the proclamation of an independent nation under the name “Ghana”.

### Knowing Gandhi

There are many different kinds of sources from which we can reconstruct the political career of Gandhi ji and the history of the nationalist movement.

#### Public Voice and Private Scripts

- ❖ One important source is the writings and speeches of Mahatma Gandhi and his contemporaries, including both his associates and his political adversaries. Mahatma Gandhi regularly published in his journal, ***Harijan***. Nehru edited a collection of letters written to him during the national movement and published *A Bunch of Old Letters*.

#### Framing a Picture

- ❖ Autobiographies are retrospective accounts written very often from memory. They tell us what the author could recollect, what he or she saw as important, or was keen on recounting, or how a person wanted his or her life to be viewed by others. Writing an autobiography is a way of framing a picture of yourself.

#### Through Police Eyes

- ❖ Another vital source is the letters and reports **written by policemen and other officials** that were secret at the time, but now can be accessed in archives.
- ❖ One such source was the **fortnightly reports** that were prepared by the Home Department from the early twentieth century based on police information from the localities, but often



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expressed what the higher officials saw, or wanted to believe. The Home Department was unwilling to accept that Mahatma Gandhi's actions had evoked any enthusiastic response from the masses. The march was seen as a drama, an antic, a desperate effort to mobilise people who were unwilling to rise against the British and were busy with their daily schedules, happy under the Raj.

### From Newspapers

- ❖ Contemporary newspapers, published in English as well as in the different Indian languages, tracked Mahatma Gandhi's movements and reported on his activities, and also represented what ordinary Indians thought of him.
- ❖ They were published by people who had their own political opinions and world views. These ideas shaped what was published and the way events were reported.
- ❖ The reports published in a **London newspaper** would be different from the report in an **Indian nationalist paper**.

### Conclusion

The Indian National Movement had an important role in building the nation. Although sometimes the movement was motivated for regional gain, this contributed to gaining the sense of nationalism. In India's freedom struggle Gandhi played an undeniable critical role. As we have seen, sometimes people thought of Gandhi ji as a kind of messiah, as someone who could help them overcome their misery and poverty. At times, ordinary people credited Gandhi ji with their own achievements. In this struggle Gandhi never wanted the partition. Partition also meant that India changed, many of its cities changed, and a new country – Pakistan – was born. So, the joy of our country's independence from British rule came mixed with the pain and violence of Partition. Thus, the freedom he had struggled so long for had come at an unacceptable price, with a nation divided and Hindus and Muslims at each other's throats.

Timeline	Event
1895	Natal Congress
1915	Mahatma Gandhi returns from South Africa
1916	Opening of the Banaras Hindu University (BHU)
1917	Champaran movement
1918	Peasant movements in Kheda (Gujarat), and workers' movement in Ahmedabad
1919	Rowlatt Satyagraha (March-April)
1919	Jallianwala Bagh massacre (April)
1921	Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements
1927	Simon Commission appointed by British
1928	Peasant movement in Bardoli
1929	"Purna Swaraj" accepted as Congress goal at the Lahore Congress (December)
1930	Civil Disobedience Movement begins; Dandi March (March-April)
1931	Gandhi-Irwin Pact (March); Second Round Table Conference (December)
1935	Government of India Act promises some form of representative government
1939	Congress ministries resign
1942	Quit India Movement begins (August)
1946	Mahatma Gandhi visits Noakhali and other riot-torn areas to stop communal violence



## Glossary

- **Sovereign:** The capacity to act independently without outside interference.
- **Publicist:** Someone who publicises an idea by circulating information, writing reports, speaking at meetings.
- **Repeal:** To undo law; to officially end the validity of something such as a law.
- **Revolutionary violence:** The use of violence to make a radical change within society.
- **Council:** An appointed or elected body of people with an administrative, advisory or representative function.
- **Knighthood:** An honour granted by the British Crown for exceptional personal achievement or public service.
- **Picket:** People protesting outside a building or shop to prevent others from entering.
- **Mahants:** Religious functionaries of Sikh gurdwaras.
- **Illegal eviction:** Forcible and unlawful throwing out of tenants from the land they rent.
- **Provincial autonomy:** Capacity of the provinces to make relatively independent decisions while remaining within a federation.
- **General constituencies:** Election districts with no reservations for any religious or other community.







# Educating the Nation

**Bibliography:** This Chapter encompasses a summary of **Chapter 6 - VIII NCERT** (Our Past III)

## Introduction

The British came to India not only to fulfill their territorial conquest and control over revenue but they also felt that they had a **cultural mission to “civilize the natives”**, change their customs and values. For this they took special interest in “education of Indians”. This had several implications on the lives of Indians. And our education system, even today, is heavily influenced by the systems introduced by the British.

## Education Under the British Rule

Many ideas of education and many education systems that we take for granted today have evolved in the last two hundred years. There were serious debates regarding the education system in India and many schools of thought emerged during that course. The Indian populace and leaders also reacted in varied ways to the ‘civilizing mission’ of the British.

## Orientalist Thought

- ❖ **William Jones** arrived in Calcutta in 1783. He was appointed as a junior judge at the Supreme Court. He was a **linguist** and had studied Greek and Latin at Oxford, knew French and English, had also learnt Arabic and Persian. In India he soon began studying ancient Indian texts on law, philosophy, religion, politics, morality, arithmetic, medicine and the other sciences.
- ❖ Others who had studied about ancient Indian heritage, Indian languages and translated Sanskrit and Persian works into English were Englishmen like **Henry Thomas Colebrooke** and **Nathaniel Halhed**.
- ❖ All of them had shared deep respect for ancient cultures, both of India and of the West.
- ❖ Together with them, Jones set up the **Asiatic Society of Bengal**, and started a journal called **Asiatic Researches**. Jones and Colebrooke came to represent a particular attitude towards India.
- ❖ They realized that to better understand India, it was necessary to discover the sacred and legal texts that were produced in the ancient period by both Hindus and Muslims, because only after studying the ancient past, the future development of India could be planned.



**Figure 7.1: Henry Thomas Colebrooke**  
He was a scholar of Sanskrit and ancient sacred writings of Hinduism.



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- ❖ Thus, Jones and Colebrooke translated many texts, discovered many ancient Indian texts and knew that this would help the British learn from Indian culture but it would also help Indians rediscover their own heritage, and understand the lost glories of their past.
- ❖ Influenced by such ideas, many Company officials argued that the British ought to promote Indian rather than Western learning. The need was felt to set up institutions to encourage the study of ancient Indian texts and teach Sanskrit and Persian literature and poetry.
- ❖ They also felt that in order to win a place in the hearts of the “natives” and to remove “alien” rule, Hindus and Muslims must be taught what they valued and treasured and not alien subjects.
- ❖ Hence, a **madrassa was set up in Calcutta in 1781** to promote the study of Arabic, Persian and Islamic law; and the **Hindu College was established in Benaras in 1791** to encourage the study of ancient Sanskrit texts that would be useful for the administration of the country.

**Linguist:** Someone who knows and studies several languages

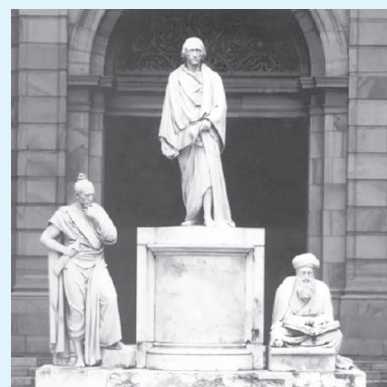
**Madrassa:** An Arabic word for a place of learning; any type of school or college

#### POINTS TO PONDER

The successful expansion of primary education was largely attributed to the use of vernacular languages for teaching. However, in contemporary times, there is a diminished emphasis on vernacular education. Can you think of the benefits of teaching in vernaculars?



This image represents how Orientalists thought of British power in India. You will notice that the majestic figure of Hastings, an enthusiastic supporter of the Orientalists, is placed between the standing figure of a pandit on one side and a seated munshi on the other side. Hastings and other Orientalists needed Indian scholars to teach them the “vernacular” languages, tell them about local customs and laws, and help them translate and interpret ancient texts. Hastings took the initiative to set up the **Calcutta Madrasa**, and believed that the ancient customs of the country and Oriental learning ought to be the basis of British rule in India.



**Figure 7.2: Monument to Warren Hastings, by Richard Westmacott, 1830, now in Victoria Memorial in Calcutta**

### Anglicist Thought

- ❖ The people from this school of thought criticized the Orientalists. According to them, knowledge of the East was **full of errors and unscientific** and Eastern literature was **non-serious and light-hearted**.
- ❖ **James Mill** was one of its proponents. He said that the aim of education ought to be to teach what was useful and practical. Indians should be made familiar with the scientific and technical advances of the West.
- ❖ By the 1830s, the attack on the Orientalists became sharper. **Thomas Babington Macaulay** also saw India as an uncivilized country that needed to be civilized. He

#### Language of the wise

Emphasising the need to teach English, **Macaulay** declared: All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives ... of India, contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them ...

-From Thomas Babington Macaulay, Minute of 2 February 1835 on Indian Education

urged that the British government in India should stop wasting public money in promoting Oriental learning, because it had no practical use.

- ❖ Macaulay said, “who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia”.
- ❖ He emphasized the need to teach the English language to make Indians aware of the developments in Western science and philosophy. English education would civilize Indians, change (perhaps make it better) their tastes, values and culture.
- ❖ The **English Education Act of 1835** was introduced, based on **Macaulay’s minutes**. The decision was to make English the medium of instruction for higher education.
- ❖ The promotion of Oriental institutions was to be stopped as they were seen as “**temples of darkness**” that were falling into decay.

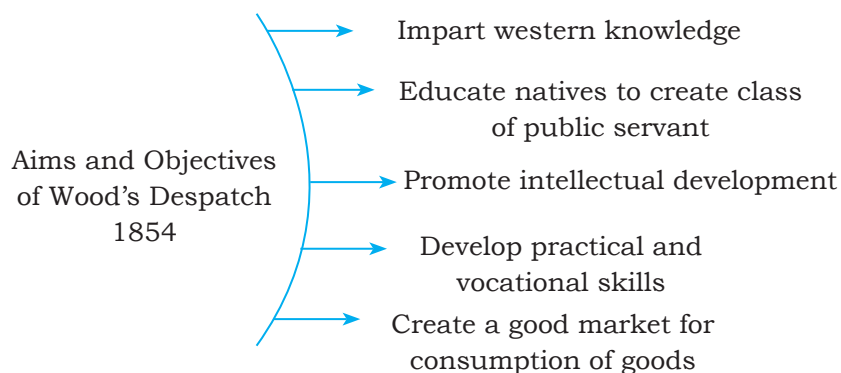
#### An argument for European knowledge

**Wood’s Despatch of 1854** marked the final triumph of those who opposed Oriental learning. It stated.

“We must emphatically declare that the education which we desire to see extended in India is that which has for its object the diffusion of the improved arts, services, philosophy, and literature of Europe, in short, European knowledge”.

### Education for Commerce

- ❖ In 1854, **Charles Wood**, the President of the Board of Control sent an educational despatch to India. It was famously known as **Wood’s Despatch**.



- ❖ It also emphasized the practical benefits of a system of European learning, as opposed to Oriental knowledge. One of the practical uses the Despatch pointed to was economic.
- ❖ According to it, European learning would make Indians appreciate the advantages of trade and commerce in the development of the country.
- ❖ Introducing them to European ways of life would change their tastes and desires, and create a demand for British goods.
- ❖ They argued, it would also **improve the moral character of Indians**. It would make them truthful and honest, and thus supply the Company with civil servants who could be trusted and depended upon.
- ❖ The literature of the East was full of grave errors and it could also not instill in people a sense of duty and a commitment to work, nor could it develop the skills required for administration.
- ❖ Thus, several measures were introduced by the British: Government extended control over the education department, steps were taken to establish University education.
- ❖ In **1857 universities were established in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay**. Attempts were also made to bring about changes within the system of school education.



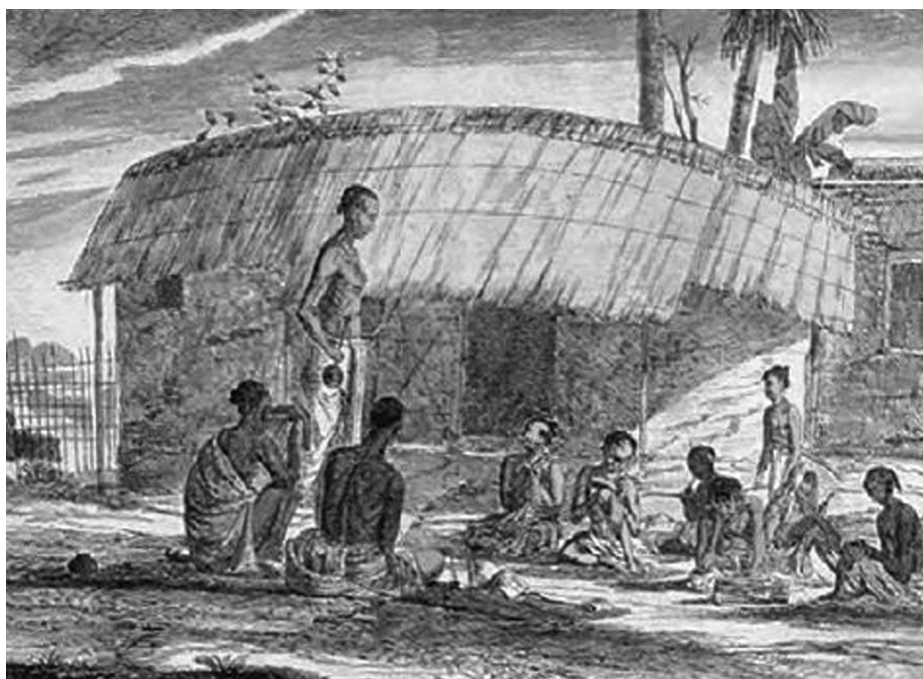
**Figure 7.3: William Carey was a Scottish missionary who helped establish the Serampore Mission**

### The Demand for Moral Education

The argument for practical education was strongly criticised by the Christian missionaries in India in the nineteenth century. The missionaries felt that education should attempt to **improve the moral character of the people, and morality could be improved only through Christian education**. Until 1813, the East India Company was opposed to missionary activities in India. It feared that missionary activities would provoke reaction amongst the local population and make them suspicious of British presence in India. Unable to establish an institution within British-controlled territories, the missionaries set up a mission at Serampore in an area under the control of the Danish East India Company. A printing press was set up in 1800 and a college established in 1818. Over the nineteenth century, missionary schools were set up all over India. After 1857, however, the British government in India was reluctant to directly support missionary education. There was a feeling that any strong attack on local customs, practices, beliefs and religious ideas might enrage “native” opinion.

### Local Schools in India

- ❖ **William Adam**, a Scottish missionary, toured the districts of Bengal and Bihar to report on the progress of education in vernacular schools.
- ❖ He found out that there were over **1 lakh ‘pathshalas’ in Bengal and Bihar**. They were small with around 20 students in each pathshala, but the total number of children taught was over 20 lakh.



**Figure 7.4: A village pathshala. This is a painting by a Dutch painter, Francois Solvyn, who came to India in the late eighteenth century. He tried to depict the everyday life of people in his paintings.**



- ❖ These institutions were set up by wealthy people, the local community or were started by a teacher (guru).
- ❖ The education here was flexible with no fixed fee, no printed books, no separate school building, no benches or chairs, no blackboards, no system of separate classes, no roll-call registers, no annual examinations, and no regular time-table. Teaching was largely oral and the Guru decided what to teach.
- ❖ Fees depended on the income of the parents and education in these pathshalas was tailored to local needs. For example, classes were not held during harvest time when rural children often worked in the fields. All this meant that even children of peasant or poor families could study.

### Effect of British Education System on Local Schools

- ❖ Up to the mid-nineteenth century, the Company was concerned primarily with higher education. So it allowed the local pathshalas to function without much interference.
- ❖ After 1854, the Company decided to improve the system of vernacular education in local schools.
- ❖ A number of government appointed pandits were made in charge of looking after 4 to 5 schools. Each Guru was asked to submit periodic reports and take classes according to the time-table. Only pathshalas which accepted the new rules were supported through government grants.
- ❖ Teaching was now to be based on textbooks and learning was to be tested through a system of annual examination. Students were asked to pay a regular fee, attend regular classes, sit on fixed seats, and obey the new rules of discipline.
- ❖ As a consequence of this new fixed education system, **children of poor or peasant families could not afford education** with fixed fees and attend regular school. **Education thus became a luxury** and a large section of the Indian population could not pursue it.

#### Sri Aurobindo Ghose

In a speech delivered on January 15, 1908 in Bombay, Aurobindo Ghose stated that the goal of national education was to awaken the spirit of nationality among the students. This required a contemplation of the heroic deeds of our ancestors. The education should be imparted in the vernacular so as to reach the largest number of people. Aurobindo Ghose emphasised that although the students should remain connected to their own roots, they should also take the fullest advantage of modern scientific discoveries and Western experiments in popular governments. Moreover, the students should also learn some useful crafts so that they could be able to find some moderately remunerative employment after leaving their schools.

### The Agenda for a National Education

Not only the British but even Indian people began talking about the need for a wider spread of education. There were differences here too. Some Indians felt that Western education would help modernize India. They urged the British to open more schools, colleges and universities, and spend more money on education. There were other Indians, however, who reacted against Western education. Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore were two such individuals.

### Gandhi on Education

- ❖ He argued that **colonial education created a sense of inferiority in the minds of Indians**. It was sinful as it enslaved the minds of Indians and destroyed the pride they had in their own culture. Indians educated in western styled education looked down upon Indian values and admired the British rule.

- ❖ According to Gandhi, education was meant to instill self respect and dignity in an individual and not create inferiority complex. During the national movement, he urged **students to leave educational institutions** in order to show to the British that Indians were no longer willing to be enslaved.
- ❖ Mahatma Gandhi strongly felt that Indian languages ought to be the medium of teaching. English had crippled Indians and made them **“strangers in their own lands”**. Speaking a foreign tongue, despising local culture, the English educated did not know how to relate to the masses.
- ❖ According to him, there was a **difference in being educated and being literate**. English education made people literate, as it solely focussed on reading and writing. The **goal of education was to develop a person’s mind and soul**.

**“Literacy in itself is not education”**

Mahatma Gandhi wrote: By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is not education. I would therefore begin the child’s education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to produce from the moment it begins its training ... I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e. the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process. - The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 72, p. 79

**Tagore on Education**

- ❖ As a child, Tagore hated going to school. His mind often wandered away. He found it suffocating and oppressive. The school appeared like a prison.



**Figure 7.5: Mahatma Gandhi along with Kasturba Gandhi sitting with Rabindranath Tagore and a group of girls at Santiniketan, 1940**

- ❖ He wanted to set up a school where the child was happy, where she could be **free and creative**, where there was time for **self-learning**, outside the rigid and restricting discipline of the schooling system set up by the British.
- ❖ According to Tagore, the existing schools killed the natural desire of the child to be creative, her sense of wonder. Teachers had to be imaginative, understand the child, and help the child develop her curiosity.
- ❖ Tagore believed that learning could only be encouraged within a natural environment. So he set up his school in 1901 which is around 100 kilometers away from Calcutta, in a rural setting. It was named **‘Santiniketan’**, meaning the **abode of peace**, where living in harmony with nature, children could cultivate their natural creativity.

- ❖ Though both Gandhi and Tagore opposed Western education in India, there were **certain differences** between their styles of education too. Gandhiji was highly critical of Western civilisation and its worship of machines and technology. But Tagore wanted to combine elements of modern Western civilisation with the best within Indian tradition. Tagore emphasized the need to teach science and technology at Santiniketan, along with art, music and dance.

#### POINTS TO PONDER

Gandhi and Tagore emphasised holistic student development, with a focus on creativity, critical thinking, and vocational education. Can you search for traces of these ideas in the National Education Policy, 2020?



#### Education as a Civilising Mission

Until the introduction of the **Education Act in 1870**, there was no widespread education for the population as a whole for most of the nineteenth century. Child labour being widely prevalent, poor children could not be sent to school for their earning was critical for the survival of the family. The number of schools was also limited to those run by the Church or set up by wealthy individuals. It was only after the coming into force of the Education Act that schools were opened by the government and compulsory schooling was introduced.

One of the most important educational thinkers of the period was **Thomas Arnold**, who became the headmaster of the private school Rugby. Favours a secondary school curriculum which had a detailed study of the Greek and Roman classics, written 2,000 years earlier, he said: It has always seemed to me one of the great advantages of the course of study generally pursued in our English schools that it draws our minds so continually to dwell upon the past. Every day we are engaged in studying the languages, the history, and the thoughts of men who lived nearly or more than two thousand years ago...

Arnold felt that a study of the classics disciplined the mind. In fact, most educators of the time believed that such a discipline was necessary because young people were naturally savage and needed to be controlled. To become civilised adults, they needed to understand society's notions of right and wrong, proper and improper behaviour. Education, especially one which disciplined their minds, was meant to guide them on this path.

#### Conclusion

The debate on National Education is an ongoing one. Before Independence too, there were different schools of thought within and outside the nationalists regarding the system and language of education in India. Some wanted changes within the system set up by the British, and felt that the system could be extended so as to include wider sections of people. Others urged that alternative systems be created so that people were educated into a culture that was truly national. The "National" in national education, even today, remains a topic of heated discussion. But it cannot be denied that the British have left an educational legacy which still continues at school and university levels.

#### Glossary

- **Orientalists:** Those with a scholarly knowledge of the language and culture of Asia.
- **Munshi:** A person who can read, write and teach Persian.
- **Vernacular:** A term generally used to refer to a local language or dialect as distinct from what is seen as the standard language. In colonial countries like India, the British used the term to mark the difference between the local languages of everyday use and English – the language of the imperial masters.
- **Anglicist:** An expert in or student of English literature.





# Framing The Constitution

**Bibliography:** This chapter encompasses the summary of Theme XII - **XII NCERT** (Themes in Indian History III)

## Introduction

The Indian “Constitution, the lengthiest in the world”, came into effect on **26 January 1950**. Its length and complexity are understandable when we consider the country’s size and diversity. At Independence, India was not merely large and diverse, but also deeply divided. A Constitution had to be designed to keep the country together, and to take it forward. It sought to heal wounds of the past and the present, to make Indians of different classes, castes and communities come together in a shared political experiment. It also sought to nurture democratic institutions. The Constitution of India was framed **between December 1946 and November 1949, held eleven sessions, with sittings spread over 165 days**. There were intense debates that went behind its drafting and those debates prepared a blueprint for us to process the vision of the Constitution makers.



**Figure 8.1: The Constitution was signed in December 1949 after three years of debate**

## A Tumultuous Time

- ❖ 15 August 1947 was a time of great hope, but also of abject disappointment. India had been made free, but it had also been divided. Fresh in popular memory were the Quit India struggle of 1942, the most widespread popular movement against the British Raj as well as the bid by Subhas Chandra Bose to win freedom through armed struggle with foreign aid.
- ❖ Through the late 1940s there were scattered yet periodic mass protests of workers and peasants in different parts of the country. One striking feature of these popular upsurges was the **degree of Hindu-Muslim unity**. In contrast, the two leading Indian political parties, **the Congress** and the **Muslim League**, had repeatedly failed to arrive at a settlement.



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- ❖ In 1946, there was almost a year of continuous rioting across northern and eastern India known as the **Great Calcutta Killings of August 1946**. The violence culminated in the massacres.
- ❖ On Independence Day, 15 August 1947, there was an outburst of joy and hope but innumerable Muslims in India, and Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, were now faced with a cruel choice – the threat of sudden death or the squeezing of opportunities on the one side, and a forcible tearing away from their age-old roots on the other.
- ❖ Another problem faced by the new nation was that of the princely states. During the period of the Raj, approximately one-third of the area of the subcontinent was under the control of nawabs and maharajas who owed allegiance to the British Crown. **When the British left India, the constitutional status of these princes remained ambiguous.**



**Figure 8.2: Jawaharlal Nehru speaking in the Constituent Assembly at midnight on 14 August 1947**

It was on this day that Nehru gave his famous speech that began with the following lines: **“Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.”**

### **Making of Constituent Assembly**

- ❖ The Constituent Assembly was set up in 1946 under the scheme formulated by the **Cabinet Mission**. Out of the total 389 members of the Constituent Assembly, 292 were “indirectly elected by a single, transferable-vote system of proportional representation” by the members of the provincial legislatures, while 93 were nominated by “the heads of Princely states and four were from the chief commissioner provinces of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara, Coorg and British Baluchistan”. They were **not elected by universal adult franchise**.
- ❖ The Muslim League chose to boycott the Constituent Assembly. Socialists believed the Constituent Assembly was a creation of the British and hence were unwilling to join it.
- ❖ Therefore, the constituent assembly was dominated by one party-the Congress. 82 percent members of the constituent assembly were from Congress.
- ❖ But the Congress was not a party with one voice. Its members differed in their opinion on critical issues. Some members were inspired by socialism while others were defenders of landlordism. Some were close to communal parties while others were assertively secular. In the words of an Anglo-Indian member, Frank Anthony, some were “technically members of the Congress but spiritually members of the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha”.
- ❖ Discussions within the Constituent Assembly were influenced by the opinions expressed by the public. The arguments were reported in newspapers, and the proposals were publicly debated. Thus, there was collective participation from the public too.

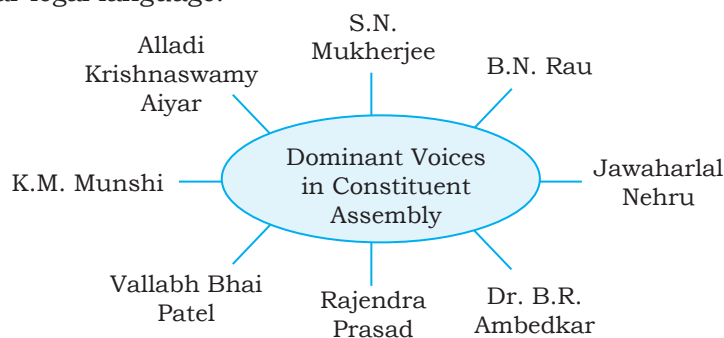
## The Dominant Voices

- ❖ Six members of the constituent assembly played important roles. They were **Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, K.M. Munshi and Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar**.
- ❖ Nehru moved the crucial “**Objectives Resolution**”, as well as the resolution proposing that the National Flag of India be a “horizontal tricolour of saffron, white and dark green in equal proportion”, with a wheel in navy blue at the centre.



**Figure 8.3: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar presiding over a discussion of the Hindu Code Bill**

- ❖ **Patel** played a key role in the drafting of several reports and worked to reconcile opposing points of view.
- ❖ **Rajendra Prasad's** role was as President of the Assembly, where he had to steer the discussion along constructive lines.
- ❖ **B.R. Ambedkar**, a prominent leader and legal expert, was appointed as the **chairman of the drafting committee**, which was tasked with preparing the first draft of the Constitution. He had joined the Union Cabinet as law minister on the advice of Gandhiji. Serving with him were two other lawyers, K.M. Munshi from Gujarat and Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar from Madras.
- ❖ These six members were given vital assistance by two civil servants. One was **B.N. Rau, Constitutional Advisor** to the Government of India, who prepared a series of background papers based on a close study of the political systems obtained in other countries.
- ❖ The other was the Chief Draughtsman, **S.N. Mukherjee**, who had the ability to put complex proposals in clear legal language.



## Vision of the Constitution

- ❖ Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the **“Objectives Resolution”** in the Constituent Assembly on **13 December 1946**. It outlined the defining ideals of the Constitution of Independent India, and provided the framework for constitution making.
- ❖ He proclaimed India to be an **“Independent Sovereign Republic”**, guaranteed its citizens justice, equality and freedom, and assured that adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas, and Depressed and Other Backward Classes.
- ❖ Nehru invoked the American and French Revolutions also. By linking the Indian struggle to these revolutionary moments in the past, Nehru tried to place the Indian struggle for Independence within a longer history of struggle for liberty and freedom.
- ❖ He did not define the specific form of democracy, and suggested that this had to be decided through deliberation.
- ❖ He stated that the objective of the Indian Constitution would be to fuse the liberal ideas of democracy with the socialist idea of economic justice, and re-adapt and re-work all these ideas within the Indian context.

### “We are not going just to copy”

This is what Jawaharlal Nehru said in his famous speech of 13 December 1946:

My mind goes back to the various Constituent Assemblies that have gone before and of what took place at the making of the great American nation when the fathers of that nation met and fashioned out a Constitution which has stood the test of so many years, more than a century and a half, and of the great nation which has resulted, which has been built up on the basis of that Constitution. My mind goes back to that mighty revolution which took place also over 150 years ago and to that Constituent Assembly that met in that gracious and lovely city of Paris which has fought so many battles for freedom, to the difficulties that that Constituent Assembly had and to how the King and other authorities came in its way, and still it continued. The House will remember that when these difficulties came and even the room for a meeting was denied to the then Constituent Assembly, they betook themselves to an open tennis court and met there and took the oath, which is called the **Oath of the Tennis Court**, that they continued meeting in spite of Kings, in spite of the others, and did not disperse till they had finished the task they had undertaken. Well, I trust that it is in that solemn spirit that we too are meeting here and that we, too, whether we meet in this chamber or other chambers, or in the fields or in the market-place, will go on meeting and continue our work till we have finished it.

Then my mind goes back to a more recent revolution which gave rise to a new type of State, the revolution that took place in Russia and out of which has arisen the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, another mighty country which is playing a tremendous part in the world, not only a mighty country but for us in India, a neighbouring country. So our mind goes back to these great examples and we seek to learn from their success and to avoid their failures. Perhaps we may not be able to avoid failures because some measure of failure is inherent in human effort. Nevertheless, we shall advance, I am certain, in spite of obstructions and difficulties, and achieve and realise the dream that we have dreamt so long ... We say that it is our firm and solemn resolve to have an independent sovereign republic. India is bound to be sovereign, it is bound to be independent and it is bound to be a republic ... Now, some friends have raised the question: “Why have you not put in the word ‘democratic’ here?” Well, I told them that it is conceivable, of course, that a republic may not be democratic but the whole of our past is witness to this fact that we stand for democratic institutions. Obviously we are aiming at democracy and nothing less than a democracy. What form of democracy, what shape it might take is another matter. The democracies of the present day, many of them in Europe and elsewhere, have played a great part in the world’s progress. Yet it may be doubtful if those democracies may not have to change their shape somewhat before long if they have to remain completely democratic. We are not going just to copy, I hope, a certain democratic procedure or an institution of a so-called democratic country. We may improve upon it. In any event whatever system of government we may establish here must fit in with the temper of our people and be acceptable to them. We stand for democracy. It will be for this House to determine what shape to give to that democracy, the fullest democracy, I hope. The House will notice that in this Resolution, although we have not used the word “democratic” because we thought it is obvious that the word “republic” contains that word and we did not want to use unnecessary words and redundant words, we have done something





much more than using the word. We have given the content of democracy in this Resolution and not only the content of democracy but the content, if I may say so, of economic democracy in this Resolution. Others might take objection to this Resolution on the ground that we have not said that it should be a Socialist State. Well, I stand for Socialism and, I hope, India will stand for Socialism and that India will go towards the constitution of a Socialist State and I do believe that the whole world will have to go that way.

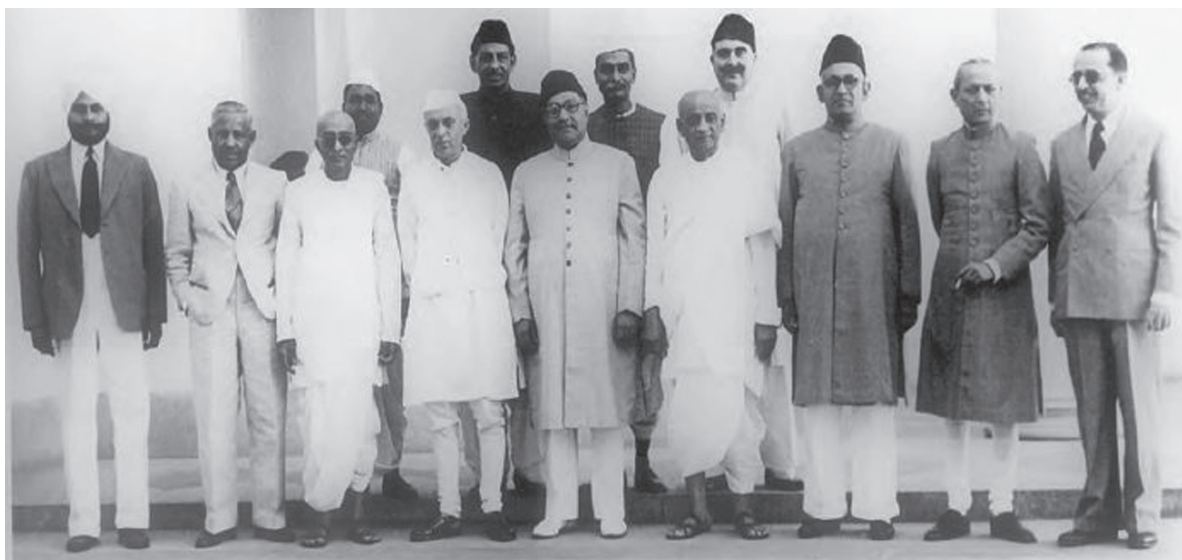
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES (CAD), VOL.I

## Will of the People

- ❖ In the winter of 1946-47, as the Assembly deliberated, the British were still in India. An interim administration headed by Jawaharlal Nehru was in place, but it could only operate under the directions of the Viceroy and the British Government in London.
- ❖ A Communist member, **Somnath Lahiri** saw this dark hand of British imperialism hanging over the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly. He therefore urged the members and Indians to fully free themselves from the influences of imperial rule.
- ❖ But Nehru reiterated that though the British Government had a “hand in its birth”, and it had attached certain conditions within which the Assembly had to function. But the assembly derived its strength from the **will of the people**.
- ❖ **Democracy, equality and justice** were ideals that were associated with the social struggles in India. Thus, they were not alien ideals for Indians.
- ❖ When the social reformers in the nineteenth century opposed child marriage and demanded that widows be allowed to remarry, they were pleading for social justice. When Swami Vivekananda campaigned for a reform of Hinduism, he wanted religions to become more just. When Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra pointed to the suffering of the depressed castes, or Communists and Socialists organised workers and peasants, they were demanding economic and social justice.

### POINTS TO PONDER

The Indian Constitution holds the distinction of being the largest written constitution in the world. The Constituent Assembly successfully crafted it in just under two years, drawing inspiration from a variety of sources. Can you identify these diverse sources of inspiration for the Constituent Assembly?



**Figure 8.4: Members of the Interim Government: Front row (left to right): Baldev Singh, John Mathai, C. Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan, Vallabhbhai Patel, I.I. Chundrigar, Asaf Ali, C.H. Bhabha. Back row (left to right): Jagjivan Ram, Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Rajendra Prasad, Abdur Nishtar**



- ❖ The Indian national movement was inevitably a struggle for democracy and justice, for citizens' rights and equality.
- ❖ The constitutional Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935 were not directly debated and formulated by Indians. They were enacted by the colonial government. The electorate that elected the provincial bodies had expanded over the years, but even in 1935 it remained limited to no more than 10 to 15 percent of the adult population as there was no universal adult franchise.
- ❖ The vision that Nehru was trying to outline on 13 December 1946 was that the **Constitution was of an independent, sovereign Republic of India.**

### Defining Rights

- ❖ There were many questions lurking around the rights of individual citizens, of groups, minorities etc. and the answer to these questions were not easy nor were the debates surrounding them.
- ❖ Nehru declared that the makers of the Constitution had to fulfil "the passions that lie in the hearts of the masses". But this was no easy task because different groups expressed their will in different ways, and made different demands.

### The Problem with Separate Electorates

- ❖ **B. Pocker Bahadur** from Madras made a powerful **plea for continuing separate electorates.** He opined that minorities exist everywhere and there was a need to create a political framework in which minorities could live in harmony with others, and the differences between communities could be minimised.
- ❖ He felt that harmonious living with the majority was possible only if minorities were well represented within the political system, their voices heard, their views taken into account. Only separate electorates would ensure that Muslims had a meaningful voice in the governance of the country. The needs of Muslims could not be properly understood by non-Muslims.
- ❖ This demand for separate electorates provoked anger and dismay amongst most nationalists. Most nationalists saw separate electorates as a measure deliberately introduced by the British to divide the people.
- ❖ **R.V. Dhulekar** replied to this demand by saying that separate electorates were made to allure the minorities to a long lull only.
- ❖ According to **Sardar Patel**, separate electorates was a "poison that has entered the body politic of our country". It was a demand that had turned one community against another, and divided the nation.

#### "The British Element is Gone, but they have Left the Mischief Behind"

Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel said:

It is no use saying that we ask for separate electorates, because it is good for us. We have heard it long enough. We have heard it for years, and as a result of this agitation we are now a separate nation ... Can you show me one free country where there are separate electorates? If so, I shall be prepared to accept it. But in this unfortunate country if this separate electorate is going to be persisted in, even after the division of the country, woe betide the country; it is not worth living in. Therefore, I say, it is not for my good alone, it is for your own good that I say it, forget the past. One day, we may be united ... The British element is gone, but they have left the mischief behind. We do not want to perpetuate that mischief. (Hear, hear). When the British introduced this element they had not expected that they would have to go so soon. They wanted it for their easy administration. That is all right. But they have left the legacy behind. Are we to get out of it or not?

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- ❖ **Govind Ballabh Pant** declared that it was not only harmful for the nation but also for the minorities as it would permanently isolate them, make them vulnerable and deprive them of any effective say within the government. Separate electorates were suicidal for the minorities.

“There is the unwholesome and to some extent degrading habit of thinking always in terms of communities and never in terms of citizens,”

–Govind Ballabh Pant

- ❖ The majority community had an obligation to try and understand the problems of minorities, and empathise with their aspirations.
- ❖ All these arguments were made in order to build political unity and forge a nation, as every individual had to be moulded into a citizen of the State, each group had to be assimilated within the nation.

### **Demands for Socio-Economic Rights**

- ❖ **N.G. Ranga**, a **socialist** who had been a **leader of the peasant movement**, urged that the term minorities be interpreted in economic terms. The real minorities for Ranga were the poor and the downtrodden. He pointed out that the legal rights of the constitution were a welcome step but it was meaningless for the poor people.
- ❖ It was essential to create conditions where these constitutionally enshrined rights could be effectively enjoyed by all. For this poor people need protection. They need props. They need a ladder.
- ❖ The tribals had among its representatives, the gifted orator **Jaipal Singh**. He spoke eloquently on the need to **protect the tribes**, and ensure conditions that could help them come up to the level of the general population.
- ❖ He argued that the tribes were not a numerical minority but they needed protection. They had been dispossessed of the land they had settled, deprived of their forests and pastures, and forced to move.
- ❖ The rest of society had turned away from them, spurned them. He made a moving plea for breaking the emotional and physical distance that separated the tribals from the rest of society.
- ❖ Singh was not asking for separate electorates, but he felt that reservation of seats in the legislature was essential to allow tribals to represent themselves.

#### **“The real minorities are the masses of this country”**

Welcoming the Objectives Resolution introduced by Jawaharlal Nehru, N.G. Ranga said:

Sir, there is a lot of talk about minorities. Who are the real minorities? Not the Hindus in the so-called Pakistan provinces, not the Sikhs, not even the Muslims. No, the real minorities are the masses of this country. These people are so depressed and oppressed and suppressed till now that they are not able to take advantage of ordinary civil rights. What is the position? You go to the tribal areas. According to law, their own traditional law, their tribal law, their lands cannot be alienated. Yet our merchants go there, and in the so-called free market they are able to snatch their lands. Thus, even though the law goes against this snatching away of their lands, still the merchants are able to turn the tribal people into veritable slaves by various kinds of bonds, and make them hereditary bond-slaves. Let us go to the ordinary villagers. There goes the money-lender with his money and he is able to get the villagers in his pocket. There is the landlord himself, the zamindar, and the malguzar and there are the various other people who are able to exploit these poor villagers. There is no elementary education even among these people. These are the real minorities that need protection and assurances of protection. In order to give them the necessary protection, we will need much more than this Resolution ...

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## Removal of Social Disabilities for the Depressed Classes

- ❖ During the national movement Ambedkar had demanded separate electorates for the Depressed Castes, and Mahatma Gandhi had opposed it as he believed that it would isolate them forever. Some members of the Depressed Castes emphasised that the problem of the “Untouchables” could not be resolved through protection and safeguards alone. Their disabilities were caused by the social norms and the moral values of caste society.
- ❖ Numerically the Depressed Castes were not a minority, they formed between 20 and 25 percent of the total population. Their suffering was due to their **systematic marginalisation**, not their numerical insignificance. They had no access to education, no share in the administration.
- ❖ The Constituent Assembly finally recommended that untouchability be abolished, Hindu temples be thrown open to all castes, and seats in legislatures and jobs in government offices be reserved for the lowest castes.
- ❖ But it was also acknowledged that social discrimination could not be erased only through constitutional legislation, there had to be a change in the attitudes within society.

### We have never asked for privileges

Hansa Mehta of Bombay demanded justice for women, not reserved seats, or separate electorates. We have never asked for privileges. What we have asked for is social justice, economic justice, and political justice. We have asked for that equality which alone can be the basis of mutual respect and understanding, without which real cooperation is not possible between man and woman.

### “There cannot be any divided loyalty”

Govind Ballabh Pant argued that in order to become loyal citizens people had to stop focusing only on the community and the self:

For the success of democracy one must train himself in the art of self-discipline. In democracies one should care less for himself and more for others. There cannot be any divided loyalty. All loyalties must exclusively be centred round the State. If in a democracy, you create rival loyalties, or you create a system in which any individual or group, instead of suppressing his extravagance, cares not for larger or other interests, then democracy is doomed.

CAD, VOL.II

## Powers of the State

- ❖ It was one of the most vigorously debated in the Constituent Assembly. Among those arguing for a strong Centre was Jawaharlal Nehru.
- ❖ The Draft Constitution provided for three lists of subjects: **Union, State, and Concurrent**. Over the Union list the Central government had power, over the State list the power was vested with the States. Over the concurrent list, centre and state had shared responsibility.
- ❖ More items were placed under exclusive Union control than in other federations, and more placed on the Concurrent list too than desired by the provinces. The Union also had control of minerals and key industries. **Article 356** gave the Centre the powers to take over a state administration on the recommendation of the Governor. There was a clear centre bias.
- ❖ The system of fiscal division of powers was complex. Some taxes (for instance, customs duties and Company taxes) the Centre retained all the proceeds; in other cases (such as income tax and excise duties) it shared them with the states; in still other cases (for instance, estate duties) it assigned them wholly to the states. The states, meanwhile, could levy and collect certain taxes on their own, these included land and property taxes, sales tax, and the hugely profitable tax on bottled liquor.

“Now that partition is a settled fact, ... it would be injurious to the interests of the country to provide for a weak central authority which would be incapable of ensuring peace, of coordinating vital matters of common concern and of speaking effectively for the whole country in the international sphere”.

-Nehru

## Centre-Bias in the Constitution

- ❖ The rights of the states were most eloquently defended by **K. Santhanam from Madras**. He was of the view that if the Centre was overburdened with responsibilities, it could not function effectively. By relieving it of some of its functions, and transferring them to the states, the Centre could be made stronger. Santhanam felt that the proposed allocation of powers would cripple the states. The fiscal provisions would impoverish the provinces since most taxes, except land revenue, had been made the preserve of Centre. He said that in a few years all the provinces would rise in “revolt against the Centre”.

### Who is a better patriot?

Sir A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar from Mysore said during the debate on 21 August 1947:

Let us not lay the flattering function to our soul that we are better patriots if we propose a strong Centre and that those who advocate a more vigorous examination of these resources are people with not enough national spirit or patriotism.

## The Need for a Strong Centre

- ❖ The argument for greater power to the provinces provoked a strong reaction in the Assembly. **Ambedkar** had declared that he wanted “a strong and united Centre much stronger than the Centre we had created under the Government of India Act of 1935”.
- ❖ Many members had repeatedly stated that the powers of the Centre had to be greatly strengthened to enable it to stop the communal frenzy.
- ❖ **Gopalaswami Ayyangar** declared that “the Centre should be made as strong as possible”.
- ❖ **Balakrishna Sharma** reasoned at length that only a strong centre could plan for the well-being of the country, mobilise the available economic resources, establish a proper administration, and defend the country against foreign aggression.
- ❖ The violence of the times gave a further push to centralisation. A strong centre was seen as necessary, both to forestall chaos and to plan for the country’s economic development.
- ❖ The Constitution thus showed **a distinct bias towards the rights of the Union of India** over those of its constituent states.

## Language of the Nation

- ❖ By the 1930s, the Congress had accepted that Hindustani ought to be the national language.
- ❖ **Hindustani was a blend of Hindi and Urdu**, it was a popular language of a large section of the people of India, and it was a composite language enriched by the interaction of diverse cultures.
- ❖ This multicultural language, Mahatma Gandhi thought, would be the ideal language of communication between diverse communities. It could unify Hindus and Muslims, and people of the north and the south.
- ❖ Gandhi felt that everyone should speak in a language that common people could easily understand thus he favoured Hindustani as the national language.
- ❖ But from the end of the 19th century, Hindustani as a language had been gradually changing. As communal conflicts deepened, Hindi and Urdu also started growing apart.
- ❖ There was a move to Sanskritise Hindi, purging it of all words of Persian and Arabic origin. And Urdu was being increasingly Persianised. As a consequence, language became associated with the politics of religious identities.



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**What should the qualities of a national language be?**

A few months before his death Mahatma Gandhi reiterated his views on the language question:

This Hindustani should be neither Sanskritised Hindi nor Persianised Urdu but a happy combination of both. It should also freely admit words wherever necessary from the different regional languages and also assimilate words from foreign languages, provided that they can mix well and easily with our national language. Thus our national language must develop into a rich and powerful instrument capable of expressing the whole gamut of human thought and feelings. To confine oneself to Hindi or Urdu would be a crime against intelligence and the spirit of patriotism.

HARIJANSEVAK, 12 OCTOBER 1947

**A Plea for Hindi**

- ❖ **R. V. Dhulekar**, a Congressman from the United Provinces, made an aggressive plea that Hindi be used as the language of constitution-making. He made his speech in Hindi.
- ❖ The Language Committee of the Constituent Assembly had produced its report by 1947 and had thought of a compromise formula to resolve the deadlock between those who advocated Hindi as the national language and those who opposed it. It had decided, but not yet formally declared, that Hindi in the Devanagari script would be the official language, but the transition to Hindi would be gradual.
- ❖ They devised that for the first fifteen years, English would continue to be used for all official purposes. Each province was to be allowed to choose one of the regional languages for official work within the province.
- ❖ They referred to **Hindi as the official rather than the national language**, hoping that it would placate ruffled emotions and arrive at a solution that would be acceptable to all.

**The Fear of Domination**

- ❖ **Shrimati G. Durgabai** from Madras explained her worries about the way the language discussion was developing. She informed the House that the opposition in the south against Hindi was very strong as it was felt that Hindi cuts at the very root of provincial languages.
- ❖ Durgabai felt that any move that eroded the inclusive and composite character of Hindustani, was bound to create anxieties and fears amongst different language groups. As the discussion became acrimonious, many members appealed for a spirit of accommodation.
- ❖ **T.A. Ramalingam Chettiar** from Madras emphasised that whatever was done had to be done with caution because the cause of Hindi would not be helped if it was pushed too aggressively.

**POINTS TO PONDER**

Mandarin in China, Russian in Russia, German in Germany and French in France, all these countries have a unifying common language. Do you think Hindi as a National language can help in uniting India or will lead to suppression of diverse regional languages? What according to you are the benefits of having Hindi as the National Language?

**Agreements over Central Features**

- ❖ One central feature of the Constitution had substantial agreement. This was on the granting of the vote to every adult Indian i.e. **Universal Adult Franchise (UAF)**. In many democracies vote was granted slowly, and in stages. In countries such as the United States and the United



Kingdom, only men of property were first granted the vote then, men with education were also allowed. After a long and bitter struggle, men of working-class or peasant background were also given the right to vote. An even longer struggle was required to grant this right to women.

- ❖ A second important feature of the Constitution which had almost unanimous consensus was the **emphasis on secularism**. Fundamental Rights to “freedom of religion” (**Articles 25-28**), “cultural and educational rights” (**Articles 29 and 30**), and “rights to equality” (**Articles 14, 16, 17**) were incorporated in the constitution. All religions were guaranteed equal treatment by the State and given the right to maintain charitable institutions.
- ❖ But a certain legal space was created for social reform within communities. It was used to ban untouchability and introduce changes in personal and family laws. India devised its own variant of **Secularism**, with no absolute separation rather a ‘**principled distance from all religions**’.



**Figure 8.5: B. R. Ambedkar and Rajendra Prasad greeting each other at the time of the handing over of the Constitution**

## Conclusion

The making of the Constituent Assembly in India was a complex and monumental task that involved a wide range of stakeholders representing the diverse population of the country. The debates in the Indian Constituent Assembly were instrumental in articulating the values, principles, and policies that would guide the newly independent nation. They allowed for a thorough examination of various viewpoints and ensured that the Constitution of India was a product of extensive deliberation and consensus-building. The resulting constitution has stood the test of time and continues to be the supreme law of the land, providing a framework for governance and protecting the rights and liberties of Indian citizens.

### Glossary

- **Secularism:** The separation of religion from the affairs of the state, ensuring equal treatment of all religions.
- **Socialism:** A socio-economic system where the means of production, distribution, and exchange are owned or regulated by the community as a whole.
- **Landlordism:** The practice where a person or entity, known as a landlord, owns and rents out land to tenants, often with significant control over agricultural production.
- **Universal Adult Franchise:** The principle that all adult citizens, without any discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, or economic status, have the right to vote in elections.
- **Sovereign:** Having the highest authority or power; in the context of a nation-state, it means having supreme authority over its territory and citizens without interference from external forces.
- **Republic:** A form of government in which the country is considered a “public matter” and the head of state is an elected or appointed official, not a hereditary monarch.
- **Assimilation:** The process of integrating or absorbing individuals or groups into a larger cultural or social framework.
- **Marginalisation:** The social process by which certain individuals or groups are pushed to the fringes or periphery of society, often resulting in their exclusion from meaningful participation.
- **Centralisation:** The concentration of power, authority, or decision-making in a central or centralised authority, often at the expense of regional or local entities.
- **Multicultural:** Relating to or encompassing multiple distinct cultures or ethnic groups within a society.
- **Acrimonious:** Characterised by bitterness, hostility, or sharpness of language or temper in a dispute or disagreement.

