ignou
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Indira Gandhi
National Open University
School of Social Sciences

MHI-09
Indian National Movement

Block

1

INTRODUCTION

Expert Committee

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

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

Prof. Aparna Basu
Former Professor of History
University of Delhi

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

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

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

Dr. Visalakshi Menon
Jesus and Mary College
University of Delhi

Prof. Salil Misra
Department of History
Ambedkar University, Delhi

Prof. Kapil Kumar
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Prof. Ravindra Kumar
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

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

Prof. Swaraj Basu
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

Mr. Ajay Mahurkar
Faculty of History
IGNOU, New Delhi

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

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

Course Coordinator	Programme Coordinator
Prof. S.B. Upadhyay	Prof. Swaraj Basu

Block Preparation Team

Unit No(s)	Resource Person	Unit No(s)	Resource Person
Unit 1	Prof. Salil Misra Department of History Ambedkar University Delhi	Units 3-4	Prof. S.B. Upadhyay Faculty of History IGNOU
Unit 2	Dr. Rohit Wanchoo St. Stephens College Delhi University, Delhi		

Print Production

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

COURSE INTRODUCTION

The establishment of British colonial rule in India after the battle of Plassey heralded a new era in the history of the subcontinent. The colonial rule was characterised by its ignorance or wilful neglect of the earlier administrative practices which allowed the peasants and non-peasant groups certain concessions in times of adversity. In the initial period, the colonial rulers were interested in extracting money from the people in all forms that they could. This led to drastic decline in the capability of the rural population to withstand adverse circumstances. Thus, a very large number of people died during the catastrophic Bengal famine of 1769. Although the colonial rulers tried to streamline the land-revenue administration in the closing decades of the eighteenth century and also tried to restrict the naked loot, the exploitation of the peasantry remained at a high level.

This caused continued resistance from the people right since the foundation of the colonial rule. Hundreds of peasant rebellions have been registered since then, culminating in the great revolt of 1857. Peasant and tribal rebellions continued even later, but in the later half of the nineteenth century we notice the beginning of a different form of politics. It was the modern politics in which the English-educated Indian intelligentsia played an important role. An all-India sphere of politics was sought to be created on the basis of nationalist ideology which the new intelligentsia eagerly professed. Such political activities led to the establishment of various local and provincial associations ultimately resulting in the formation of an all-India body – Indian National Congress in 1885. This Course discusses in detail this new form of politics and ideology based on nationalism which endeavoured to forge an independent nation by ending the colonial rule.

In this Course, there are 8 Blocks consisting of 35 Units covering various aspects of the Indian nationalist movement since its inception in the late nineteenth century. Indian nationalist movement, like other nationalist movements, had both similarities and differences with the model of nationalism created on the basis of European experiences. In **Block 1**, we have discussed various theories and concepts which underlie nationalisms of multiple types in many parts of the world. This Block clearly outlines that there has not been an overarching model of nationalism which can be applied in all cases. Each case, though having affinity and certain similarities with others, is unique with its own circumstances and development. Even in case of nationalism in one country, there is no unanimity of opinions about its origins and growth. This has been illustrated by detailed historiographical survey of Indian nationalism in Units 3 and 4.

Block 2 discusses the early phase of Indian nationalist movement from the late nineteenth century to the Swadeshi movement in the beginning of the twentieth century. Besides creating various organisations, including the Indian National Congress, the Indian nationalist movement developed a broad-based economic critique of colonialism which debunked the idea that the colonial rule was in the interests of the Indians. The Swadeshi movement was a nationalist upsurge where various threads of earlier nationalist critiques were joined.

In **Blocks 3 and 4**, you will learn about the nationalist movement in its mass-based and popular phases from 1918 to 1939. Here you will find that the Indian nationalist movement was not at all monolithic. Numerous ideological and political trends and organisations constituted it. On the one side of the spectrum is located the Gandhian belief in non-violence while on the other side one finds the revolutionaries who believed that acts of violence were necessary to make

the people aware of their subjection and to galvanise them against the colonial state. Similarly, you find the liberals on the one hand who believed that it was important to accept whatever little constitutional concessions were given by the British, while on the other hand there existed persons like Subhas Chandra Bose and soldiers of Indian National Army who fought armed battles against the British. Right inside the Congress, we find the right wing (which was in favour of the propertied classes and was against giving many concessions to the workers and peasants) and the left wing (which supported radical programmes for the masses). The fact that Gandhiji was able to bring most classes and groups within the same movement, at least at some junctures, says a lot about his acceptance as a great national leader by most Indians.

Block 5 focuses on the politics of the 1940s leading to Indian independence. It begins with the circumstances which gave rise to one of the great nationalist upsurges with massive popular participation – the Quit India Movement in 1942. Although the movement was crushed brutally by the British, it became quite clear during and after this movement that the Indians had shaken off the ideological influence exercised by the colonial rulers. Many popular protest movements in the mid-1940s, particularly those in support of the INA prisoners and RIN rebels, clearly revealed popular sentiments against colonial rule. The weakening of imperialist system during the War and the disenchantment of the people from colonial government left no options for the British but to leave India. This they did in 1947. However, they had sown the seeds of communal discord which resulted in the partition of India. Despite efforts from the nationalist forces of all hues, the communal vivisection of the country could not be stopped. This may be said to be one of the great failures of the nationalist movement.

Blocks 6 and 7 are concerned with the relationship between the nationalist movement (particularly its most important organisation, the Indian National Congress) and various classes and groups. In the era of democratic and mass politics, the success of any movement and organisation is gauged by their capabilities to bring the people of various kinds within its fold. The Units in these Blocks will discuss in detail the manner in which the nationalist leaders and organisations gradually built bridges with peasants, workers, women and dalits, and brought them within the ambit of the nationalist movement. The nationalist movement presented an all-class front where even antagonistic classes could co-exist.

Block 8 presents an overview of the achievements of the Indian nationalist movement. The strategies employed by the movement to carry out its struggle against the colonial rule and their successes and failures are the themes of this Block. The Constitution of India has been one of the most significant achievements of the Indian nationalist movement which emphasised on individual liberty, rule of law and democratic participation. The legacies of the nationalist movement include secularism, pluralism, democracy, social justice and peaceful co-existence.

In some Units, you may sometimes find overlaps or even differing emphases or viewpoints. There may also be some references or terms with which we may not entirely agree. As our Units are written by different persons, we endeavour to maintain authorial freedom. Thus, we have not tried to iron out different ideas or put everything within the same mould. The differences of opinions would also show that certain issues related to the national movement have been interpreted differently by different scholars. Although we have studiously avoided extreme views, we have not removed differences of opinions as they would strengthen healthy debate.

BLOCK 1 INTRODUCTION

The first Unit of this Course will introduce you to the ideas about nations and nationalisms. The nationalism, as we know it, is a modern phenomenon which evolved in eighteenth-century Europe and, in the wake of European hegemony over the globe, spread to all parts of the world. The new form of community, that is nation, was created through imagination and not through shared experiences. Such communities also demanded to have their own representative states, and they succeeded in a large number of cases. It was through this process that the nation-states emerged, which is a completely novel form of state as it is organically connected with the society. **Unit 1** will discuss various theories of nationalism and their relevance in Indian case.

Unit 2 discusses the rise and growth of anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa. It describes and analyses the various forms which the national liberation movements took in the countries of these continents. While some movements, as in India, basically followed a non-violent path of struggle, most other movements were forced to resort to various levels of violence to attain the goal of freedom. Moreover, the nation-states which emerged after the anti-colonial struggles were the result of a variety of factors. No single factor (such as industrial development, common language, public education or even common culture) was responsible for the creation of nation-states in Asia and Africa. In several cases, the feeling of commonness evolved at a general level only after the nation-states had already come into existence and had embarked on the policy of creating nationhood.

The next two Units take up a historiographical survey of the writings on Indian nationalism. In **Unit 3**, we will discus the colonialist, nationalist and Marxist perspectives on Indian nationalism. In the core of colonialist history-writing was the impossibility of India ever becoming a nation, as it was considered as just a conglomeration of numerous castes, religions, and linguistic and regional groups. It also asserted that the Indian national movement was led by a microscopic English-educated minority which did not represent the country. In reaction to this view, many nationalist historians claimed that potentially India had always been a nation, and some even asserted that India was forged into a nation at several points in the past. The nationalist historians also regarded the national movement as a pan-Indian movement encompassing all classes and groups led by idealist and selfless leaders. The Marxist historians criticised both the colonialist and nationalist histories and emphasised on the role of economic factors and classes in the creation of a nation. They argued that the national movement was directly or indirectly in favour of the bourgeoisie, even though most other classes of Indian society were also involved in it.

Unit 4 discusses two more important trends – Cambridge School and Subaltern School. Both question the official glorification of mainstream nationalism and nationalist leaders. But while the Cambridge School historians try to completely debunk the idea of anti-colonial nationalism, the Subaltern historians emphasise the existence of a popular, autonomous and militant nationalism which was different from the official version. Besides these interpretations, we have also briefly discussed another trend which points towards the presence of strong patriotic and even national sentiments in pre-colonial India.

UNIT 1 NATION AND NATIONALISM*

Structure

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Understanding Nation, Nationalism and Nation-State

    1.2.1 The Question of Nationalism

    1.2.2 Defining Nation and Nation-State

1.3 Challenges for a Theory of Nationalism

1.4 Theories of Nationalism

    1.4.1 Non-Modernist Theories

    1.4.2 Modernist Theories

1.5 Indian Nationalism

1.6 Summary

1.7 Exercises

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first Unit of the course. It attempts to familiarise you with the concept of nationalism and how it has been understood by historians and other social scientists.

Indian Nationalist Movement, as you are aware, was a grand and prolonged struggle launched against British imperialism. Nationalism was the main ideology and the instrument with whose help this struggle was launched. In the context of the Indian Nationalist Movement, Indian nationalism represented two major ideas: anti-imperialism and national unity. In other words, any person, movement or organisation that practised and upheld these two ideas, could be considered a nationalist.

But nationalism, it is important to remember, was not confined only to India. It was not even confined to the countries of Asia and Africa that came under foreign domination and struggled to get rid of it. Nationalism was truly a global phenomenon that emerged in most countries of the world and made its presence felt. It has been argued that nationalism has been the most powerful political force in the modern world. It has manifested itself as politics, ideology, movement, belief system, a sentiment and also a passion. Large numbers of stories, poems, novels and literature have been written on the theme of nationalism. Nationalism would thus appear to be a complex phenomenon that has emerged in very different and contrasting conditions. Both the developed industrial societies of Europe and the undeveloped societies of Asia and Africa, came under the spell of nationalism. Societies that had very little in common were pervaded by the phenomenon of nationalism roughly at around the same time (18th-20th century). It would thus appear that there must be a general, universal explanation for its emergence, apart from specific explanations applicable only to the context. In other words we are talking about a *theory* of nationalism. This theory (or theories) should account for nationalism *in general*. This Unit will explain to you some of the general theories of nationalism.

---

* Resource Person: Prof. Salil Misra

1.2 UNDERSTANDING NATION, NATIONALISM AND NATION-STATE

This Unit will focus on three things: 1) some of the major debates and controversies related to nationalism; 2) the various theories of nationalism that have been offered by the social scientists; and 3) the relevance these theories hold for India as a case-study.

What really is the question of nationalism? And why is it important?

1.2.1 The Question of Nationalism

When we speak of nationalism, we speak of a period between eighteenth and twentieth century. It was during this period that a large number of small, local communities began to be transformed into (a relatively smaller number of) large and homogenous communities. To put it simply, a large number of small communities began to be transformed into a small number of large communities. The largeness of numbers was replaced by the largeness of size. The new communities were marked by new ties and solidarities. New solidarities began to develop that were somewhat impersonal in nature and yet very powerful. Groups and individuals, not familiar with one another, began to look upon themselves as members of this newly created large invisible community called the Nation. What was involved in this process was a new type of imagination. New communities were getting created above all through an "imagination". The new communities were not constituted by reciprocity, common sharing of resources, or familiarity. Most communities in history (village communities, speech communities or other local groups) had been based on familiarity. The new national communities, on the contrary, were based on unfamiliarity and anonymity. The new communities were brought together, not so much by common everyday experiences, but by a certain kind of imagination. It was precisely in this sense that Benedict Anderson, a leading theorist on nationalism, referred to nations as "imagined communities".

What is more, these new groups and communities also began to insist that they should have *their* own representative state. In other words, state systems should not be external and alien to groups and communities (as was the case through most of human history), but should emanate from the communities and should be representative of them. This was really a novel situation. This congruence or identification between the state and society was something quite novel and unusual. These new features of the condition also became the defining features of nation, nationalism and nation-state. Ernest Gellner, another important theorist of nationalism, defined these terms in the opening paragraph of his book: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle. Nationalist *sentiment* is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment. A nationalist *movement* is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind" (Ernest Gellner 1983: 1).

This definition of nationalism has the merit of clarity and explicitness. The only problem with this is that it is contingent upon an understanding of nation. If nationalism as a political principle represent a congruence of state (political unit)

and nation (national unit), then we should be able to define nation, in order to understand nationalism, as per this definition. A definition of nation is not easy. It is both difficult and contentious. The main trouble with any attempt to define nation is that at any given time, we would find a large number of nations that do not conform to *that* definition. It would thus appear that the actual world of nations is so diverse (in spite of their commonalities) that no single definition can hope to include them all. It is partly for this reason that scholars have generally refrained from providing a universal definition of nation, *applicable to all situations*. They have found it easier to describe specific nations. It has been much more difficult to abstract certain broad principles on the basis of specific experiences. Ernest Gellner identified two attributes that could possibly form part of the generic definition – **culture** and **will**. But he was himself aware of the inadequacy of either, and indeed both of them in correctly identifying all types of nations. To quote him again:

"What then is this contingent, but in our age seemingly universal and normative, idea of the nation? Discussion of two very makeshift, temporary definitions will help to pinpoint this elusive concept. 1) Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communication. 2) Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it..... Each of these provisional definitions, the cultural and the voluntaristic, has some merit. Each of them singles out an element which is of real importance in the understanding of nationalism. But neither is adequate. Definitions of culture, presupposed by the first definition, in the anthropological rather than the normative sense, are notoriously difficult and unsatisfactory. It is probably best to approach this problem by using this term [nation] without attempting too much in the way of formal definition." (Ibid., p. 7)

1.2.2 Defining Nation and Nation-State

The definitional difficulties mentioned in the previous section notwithstanding, we can still, for the sake of clarity, attempt temporary, makeshift definitions of the two terms – nation and nation-state.

Perhaps the first step towards defining nation is to question and also reject its naturalness. A nation is not a natural human community, given to us. It is historical category, i.e., it is a human community that has been made in history and through history. It is a product of certain historical conditions.

Prior to modern times, i.e., before emergence of nationalism in the late 18th and the 19th centuries, the word 'nation' was used in a whole range of ways. In particular it was employed either in the sense of a race (a biological category) or in the sense of a clan (a social category larger than the family and connected through ties). These usages had nothing in common with the present day usage of the word 'nation' except in so far as they all refer to a human collectivity, which shares certain traits in common.

An entirely new element was imparted to this understanding towards the last decades of the 19ᵗʰ century. Ernest Renan, a French scholar, rejected both the racial/biological as well as the natural definitions of nation. Instead he put forward a voluntaristic definition of nation, based on 'will, memory and consciousness'. This definition had two major characteristics:

1) It did not see nations as an *a priori* reality, existing in a natural kind of way. Instead it saw nations as being formed through the forces of history.

2) It also rejected the notion that nations were formed by natural boundaries such as rivers, mountains and oceans. Instead they were formed by subjective factors such as will and consciousness.

This indeed was a major breakthrough in the understanding of nations. It looked at nations as contingencies brought about by human will. Upon this understanding, there was nothing stable or permanent about nations. They could be formed and also dissolved. In his famous speech on nations, delivered in 1882, Renan said: "Nations are not something eternal. They have begun; they will end. They will be replaced in all probability, by a European confederation. But such is not the law of the century in which we live. At the present time the existence of nations happens to be good, even necessary. Their existence is a guarantee of liberty, which would be lost if the world had only one law and only one master."

There was however one major problem with this understanding, quite apart from the fact that it concentrated solely on Europe. It accounted for nations very well and effectively, by creating categories (will, memory and consciousness) that could give as a clue to nations. But these categories were so general in nature they could be found in most communities. Many non-national communities could also be identified on the basis of will and consciousness. Indeed it can be said that most, if not all, human communities can be defined on this basis. How to then distinguish nation as a unique and distinctive human community from an enormously large pool of all kinds of human communities? Renan's definition captured the generic part of nations very well but neglected their distinctive part. In other words, it had the merit of being very inclusive. Its defect was that it was not sufficiently exclusive.

Some of the shortcomings of Renan's understanding were addressed by Joseph Stalin in 1913. He focused on the distinctive features of nations. Stalin defined nations in the following words: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." This definition laid down five main features that would give us a clue to nations: historic continuity, common language, territory, common grid of economic life and a common culture.

Stalin's understanding was in some ways the opposite of Ranan's, even though they both shared the basic digits that nations were *formed* and did not exist as an *a priori* reality. If Renan approached nations from the generic side of the scale, Stalin went to the other end and approached nations from the specific side. Stalin highlighted the distinctive part so much that he perhaps ignored the role of general attributes such as will and consciousness in the making of a nation. If we take the example of European Jews in the 20ᵗʰ century, we would find that the Jewish nation is not adequately covered by Stalin's definition. But it is covered by Renan's.

There is no doubt that Stalin's definition was an advance over Renan's. But even both the definitions put together cannot cover all the possible nations in the world. What is the vital element missing? It is here that Ernest Gellner comes in quite handy. He provided the missing element in 1983 in his book *Nations and Nationalism*. He put forward the important and somewhat controversial idea that nations in the end are made by nationalism, and not the other way round. It is not the case that already formed nations create their own justification through the ideology of nationalism; but rather that nations are made by nationalism. If we apply this understanding to the Indian case, we would infer that it was not the Indian nation that created Indian nationalism, but rather that the Indian nation itself was created (along with various other factors, of course) by the ideology of Indian nationalism.

The addition of this missing element can then complete our definition of nation. If we put all the three elements together – subjective, objective, and ideological, we can say with confidence that we have a definition of nation that covers all the possible nations, which is inclusive enough to cover all nations and also exclusive enough to distinguish nations from other non-national human communities. Here is then our complete definition: By nation we refer to a large, anonymous human community that is brought together by subjective features such as will, consciousness and memory; objective features such as historic continuity, common language, territory, economic life and common culture; and ideological features such as nationalism.

The merit of this definition is that no actual, potential or conceivable nation is outside its net. Yet it excluded the non-nations. It is important however to remember that not all features of this definition apply to all situations. Indian nationalism, for instance, was not based on a common language. Jewish or Polish nationalisms were not based on common territory, or even a common economic life. Many other nationalists of Eastern Europe (Albania for instance) were not based on any great historic continuity. So, not all nations are covered by all the features of the definition. But all in all, we can say that that all the nations – actual or potential – are covered by some features of the definition and that no nation can possibly exist outside this definition net.

Once a comprehensive and inclusive definition of nation is available to us (thanks to the contributions made by Renan in 1882, Stalin in 1913 and Gellner in 1983, stretched over the period of a hundred years), it is easier for us to understand nationalism and nation-state. Nationalism, as mentioned earlier in this unit is the insistence on the congruence of nation and state, in other words that the state should be representative of the people. This is virtually a precondition of nationalism. A nation-state is actually a state of this kind. The human history has been pervaded by all kinds of state systems but none of them fulfilled this nationalist condition. It is only under modern times and conditions that a new type of state – nation-state – emerges in which the society and state are organically connected to each other. To put it differently, nationalism is the main actor that insists on the creation of a nation-state. Nations are large modern communities which desire their own representative state. Nationalism actually helps to bring it about.

Having understood something about nations and nationalism at an elementary level, it is now time to discuss the theories of nationalism, i.e., the major attempts to explain this phenomenon.

1.3 CHALLENGES BEFORE A THEORY OF NATIONALISM

It is significant that the emergence of new national communities happened to coincide with another monumental phenomenon in the world – transformation of the world from agrarian to industrial and the creation of a new type of social order – industrial society. Was it simply a coincidence or were the two transformations (from small local communities to large national communities and from agrarian societies to an industrial social order) connected to each other in a cause-effect relationship? Many scholars thought that the two were integrally connected. Ernest Gellner provided a neat and elegant theory of how the emergence of nationalism was the product of this transformation and was deeply implicated in it. Many others have agreed with him on this point. A large number of scholars have looked at nationalism, as distinctively modern, and some have specifically linked it to industrialism. Upon this view, there was something about industrialism that created nations. The creation of nations was inherent in the process of industrialism. Some of the features of the industrial society were such that the raw material of diverse human communities began to be transformed into the somewhat finished product of neat, standardized, homogenized, large national communities. Evidently the great nationalist experiences of the world required a theory that would be comprehensive enough to cover the range of those experiences. The theory focusing on industrialism did address some questions but left some other questions unanswered.

In particular there was one major trouble with the theory that linked nationalism to industrialism. It is now clear that as industrialism developed, it was confined to small pockets of European countries. Nationalism, by comparison, had spread to large parts of the world. Industrialism and nationalism may have begun at roughly around the same time (late 18th- 19th centuries) but after that their trajectories became very dissimilar. Their trajectories also went contrary to anticipations made about them. On industrialism the general anticipation was that gradually industrial affluence would be diffused and would spread to other parts of the world. Nationalism by comparison was considered a European, rather than a global phenomenon. But both the anticipations turned out not to be the case. Industrialism did not get diffused to the rest of the world in an even and uniform manner. Instead it led to the creation of a European 'core' and a periphery that consisted of the countries of Asia and Africa. The economies of these societies were placed at the service of the core. The core-periphery transactions were carried out through new devices such as imperialism and colonialism.

Nationalism by comparison did spread to the rest of the world and developed as truly a global phenomenon. There was nothing strictly European about it. It also cast its spell on areas and communities that were far from industrialised. This then was a real challenge for a theory of nationalism that sought to explain it in terms of the spread of industrialism and located it within the matrix of industrialism. This called for a new approach and a different explanation.

It should be quite clear that a phenomenon as widespread as nationalism could not have come about simply as an accident. If large parts of the world went through a similar experience, broadly at the same time, then there must be a valid explanation for it. Moreover there also must be broadly similar set of

circumstances giving birth to nationalism. What for instance was common between 19th century England and 20th century India? One was an advance industrial country and an imperialist super power. The other was an economically backward country undergoing imperialist domination. Which common set of circumstances could have brought about nationalism in both these societies?

It was partly for dilemmas such as the ones mentioned above, that we do not have one dominant theory of nationalism, but many. It is not so much that we have different types of nationalisms. But we do have very different explanations for the emergence of nationalism. So divergent are these explanations that Benedict Andersons has written: "...it is hard to think of any political phenomenon which remains so puzzling and about which there is less analytic consensus. No widely accepted definition exists. No one has been able to demonstrate decisively either its modernity or its antiquity....[any collection of writings on nationalism] finds the authors more often with their backs to one another, staring out at different, obscure horizons, than engaged in hand to hand combat." (Benedict Anderson, "Introduction" in Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, p. 1). He also stated that the political power of nationalism is matched by its philosophical poverty. This implies that whereas everybody recognizes the political power nationalism enjoys in modern world, there is very little consensus on what has brought it about. Let us therefore turn to different ways in which nationalism has been understood and explained by social scientists.

1.4 THEORIES OF NATIONALISM

Before we illustrate the different theories of nationalism, one or two general points may be made. All the theorists of nationalism would agree that a phenomenon as pervasive and widespread as nationalism cannot be explained only by specific or endogenous factors or factors operative within the society. It can only be satisfactorily explained by external or exogenous factors, or factors from outside the particular society. As Tom Nairn, a leading scholar on nationalism, has put it: "However, it is not true that nationalism of any kind is really the product of these internal motions as such.... Welsh *national-* ism [emphasizing the nation] of course has much to do with the specifics of the Welsh people, their history, their particular forms of oppression and all the rest of it. But Welsh national- *ism* [emphasizing the Ism] – that generic, universal necessity recorded in the very term we are very interested in – has nothing to do with Wales. It is not a Welsh fact, but a fact of general developmental history, that at a specific time the Welsh land and people are forced into the historical process in this fashion." (Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*.)

The main difference among the theorists of nationalism lies in the *identification* of these external factors. Some would look at nationalism as a necessary stage of human development that all societies must go through, sooner or later. Some others might see it in more general terms as the unfolding of the 'human spirit', or a great social and psychological need for identity, or for identifying with a larger whole. But all would agree that the phenomenon of nationalism has a broad, trans-country, generic explanation. If nationalism can be identified on the basis of some common traits, experienced by different societies broadly at the same time (18th – 20th centuries), then there must be some general explanations for it.

However similarities among theorists end here. The theorists may all agree on a need for theory but not on the substance of the theories. They offer very diverse explanations for nationalism. These differences can be best understood through binaries. These binaries range from looking at nationalism as either an accident or a great human need, either necessary or contingent, either ideational (i.e., product of certain ideas) or materialist, either a false consciousness or a great human aspiration, either brought about by certain important social groups or by structures. But the most important binary is that between modernists and non-modernists. Let us look at this binary in some details.

1.4.1 Non-Modernist Theories

As far as theories of nationalism are concerned, perhaps the biggest dividing line is between modernist and non-modernist ones. The modernists look upon nationalism as a modern phenomenon and a product of not more than the last three centuries. On the other side of the divide are the non-modernists who refuse to privilege the modern period for an understanding of nationalism and instead look at the larger spread of time. Their argument is that a phenomenon as deeply pervasive and implicated in human life as nationalism could not have simply been created in such a short span of time and that the phenomenon must have evolved over a long stretch of time.

At this stage it is necessary to highlight that both the positions – modernist as well as non-modernist – are internally quite diverse. Not all modernists agree with each and share little in common except for being modernists. Likewise non-modernists too come in all shapes and sizes. They could easily be divided between evolutionists, naturalists and perennialists. Naturalists often see the nation as something natural and rooted in human mind. They see nationalism as a very natural human sentiment. Upon this understanding, it is somehow natural for people to be nationalists. Since they consider it as natural, they do not have to provide any explanation for it. One major scholar for instance referred to nationalism as a "state of mind". Naturalists do not use expressions like rise or growth or emergence of nationalism. They only talk about a permanent, timeless presence of nationalist feeling in the minds and hearts of people. Nationalism therefore does not need an explanation. Upon this nationalist view, it is not nationalism but its absence that has to be explained.

Close to the naturalists position is the perennialist position. This is often found in the approach of nationalists themselves. The practitioners and ideologues of nationalism often tend to see their brand of nationalism as fully formed in their history. To take an example, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the ideologue and propagator of Pakistani nationalism, often said from 1940 onwards, that a Muslim nation was not a product of recent political developments, but that a Muslim nation existed in a fully finished form in the medieval past. When Jinnah was asked about the exact location of his Muslim nation and when it came into being, he provided an interesting answer: Pakistan already existed since a long time; it was not created in the recent past. He clarified further in a speech: "Pakistan … was not the product of the conduct or misconduct of Hindus. It had always been there; only they [Muslims] were not conscious of it….Pakistan started the moment the first non-Muslim was converted to Islam long before the Muslims established heir rule….Throughout the ages Hindus had remained Hindus and Muslims had remained Muslims and they had not merged their entities – that was the basis for Pakistan" (Jinnah's speech in Aligarh, March 1944, Khurshid Ahmad Khan Yusufi

(ed.), *Speeches, Statements and Messages of the Quaid-e-Azam*, Vol. III, pp. 1840-41). This was a classic example of nationalism as an 'invented tradition'.

At this stage it is necessary to bring out the distinction between a nationalist position and a position on nationalism. All nations have a 'self-image' as articulated by the nationalist ideologues or the leaders. It is important for us to understand this self-image, which tells us a great deal about that particular nation. But it is equally important for us not to endorse it as necessarily valid. In other words, nations and nationalism should be understood as real and powerful sociological phenomena, but their reality is quite different from the tale told about them by nationalists themselves. In the scholarly works on nationalism, the perennialist position has been understood and described as an "invented tradition". What is invented tradition? The idea of "invented tradition" carries the following connotation:

1) Nationalists tend to use and invoke the past and traditions as a legitimizing device to validate their nationalist projects.

2) They also claim legitimacy for *their* nation by claiming its presence in the past, history and traditions, or as a continuation from the past.

3) In such a projection, the tradition is not presented as it was, but rather it is invented or manufactured. The invention of the tradition is done in such a manner to as to support nationalist claims. Jinnah could justify his Muslim nation, only by asserting that there had been no interaction between Hindus and Muslims and hence a Muslim nation existed since a long time in Indian history. In this way, antiquity and tradition were being used to provide legitimacy for a fully modern 'Muslim nation'. The tradition was not being invoked as it was; it was being tailored and projected in a such a manner so as to justify and legitimize the Muslim nation. One way of seeking this legitimacy was to show the presence of this 'Muslim nation' in the distant past and in tradition. For this purpose, the tradition was being 'invented'. The concept of "invented traditions" was coined by leading historian Eric Hobsbawm and it has been a useful concept in understanding the nature of nations and nationalism.

Yet another important non-modernist position is the evolutionist one. It recognizes the pervasive presence of nationalism in the modern period but argues that it can be explained by going to the pre-modern period of human history. This argument focuses on pre-existing cultural traditions, heritages and various other ethnic ties, sentiments and collective memories "which have coalesced over the generations" and thus contributed to the emergence of nations in modern times. To take an example, the nature and pattern of modern Greek nationalism can be understood better by focusing on both the period of Byzantine imperialism and also the classical antiquity. Anthony D.Smith is one of the major proponents of this approach. This approach looks not at the broad and general patterns but features specific to each society. It does not focus so much on what is common to all nations, but rather on what is distinctive about each nation.

1.4.2 Modernist Theories

As against the non-modernist approaches towards understanding nationalism are the modernist ones. As mentioned earlier, not all modernists agree with one another, and that the modernist camp is as diverse as the non-modernist one, if

not more so. One of the earliest modernist arguments was provided by Elie Kedouri in 1961. Kedouri looked at nationalism primarily as a doctrine (as against a force) and saw it as rooted in the intellectual history of modern Europe. The first sentence of his book is self-explanatory: "Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century." (Elie Kedouri, *Nationalism*, p. 1) This was a non-structural explanation of nationalism which saw nationalism as rooted, not in concrete structures and specific conditions, but merely in ideas and doctrines of some European thinkers. An effective alternative to Kedouri was provided by Ernest Gellner who provided the structural explanation.

Gellner saw the emergence of nationalism as the integral part of the transformation of the world from agrarian to industrial. In this sense his theory is both structural and materialist. It is structural in the sense that he does not see it as the result of the activities of a few groups and individual but as the unfolding of new economic and productive forces creating new interplays of power and culture. His theory is materialist in the sense that it looks not as ideas and doctrines as the basic motor in the emergence of nationalist. Rather it sees nationalism as the product of the functioning of new material forces. The theory does recognize the primacy of economic forces in creating new conditions. Following is in brief the essence of Gellner's theory of nationalism:

For reasons not clear to anyone, a new, distinctive and unprecedented type of economy emerged and was established on the Atlantic shores of Europe around the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. This new economy, generically called the industrial economy, had some unique features, compared to earlier economies. One, It was based on perpetual growth. Indeed the economy could survive only if it grew and kept growing. The growing economy completely dismantled the stability of the old order. Two, It required full or substantial literacy for its functioning. This literacy had to be of a homogenous kind so that a large number of anonymous people, unfamiliar with one another, could also communicate with one another. Three, It was characterised by remarkable mobility, both occupation and spatial. Large numbers of people were uprooted from their traditional occupations, locations and cultures. As a result of the functioning of the new economy, they were thrown around from their cosy community settings and were placed in unfamiliar and alien situations. Four, the new economy was also based on egalitarianism. The new economy operated like a hurricane or a huge tidal wave that destroyed the earlier hierarchies based on rank and status. It destroyed old cultures, old structures, old hierarchies and also old community isolation. The mobility and anonymity of the new order created conditions for egalitarianism. Five, the preservation of the old, elite high-culture was found to be completely incompatible with the functioning of the new economy. Under the new situation, the high culture of the elites could not remain confined to the few at the top. It had to become shared and pervasive. So, both the multiple local folk cultures and an exclusive high culture were replaced and transformed into a pervasive and a shared high culture.

The new economy was backed up by modern science and technology and was so powerful that it destroyed the old order and , in time, replaced it with a new social order. The earlier faultlines in the European society (based on rank and status) were eroded and replaced by new boundaries based on culture. New cultures (based on the earlier exclusive high cultures and local folk cultures) developed in these societies and most members, deprived of their earlier cultural

moorings, aspired to be incorporated into the new cultures. At the same time, the role of the state became very important. The new economic apparatus became so large that it could be effectively managed only be the state. The state could maintain it only if it enjoyed the support and the allegiance of the people. This effective state-society partnership could be built only if all were members of the same culture. It was therefore necessary that the state should be representative of the society. All this called for a very new type of arrangement:

- Ordinary people, having been deprived of their cultural moorings, could now aspire to live with dignity only as members of the new high culture. The new high culture could be promoted and protected only by the state. But that could happen only if the people and the state belonged to the same culture. Hence the necessity of a state as representative of the people and from the same cultural stock as the people.

- The new economy was so large that it could not effectively run without the participation of a large number of people. But people had to be trained for the new jobs and roles. Hence 'education' became very necessary. This education had to be uniformly imparted across different categories and could be effectively provided only by the state. Therefore state became very important. In the process of imparting common education, state also released homogenizing forces, which helped in the creation of the new cultural community (or communities), tied through common culture.

- The state could not carry out its task till it had the support and allegiance of the people. It was necessary that people 'belong' to the state and that this belonging should be direct without being mediated by any other ties of kinship and community.

In other words, people should become citizens and should be directly responsible to the state.

In the functioning of all these processes, nationalism becomes the inevitable and inescapable consequence. The modern economy requires it; the modern state requires it; the society also requires it. This is the crux of Gellner's explanation for nationalism.

Gellner provided a credible theory of nationalism. One major problem with it was that it did not seem to correspond to developments in India or indeed in other colonies. The strength of Gellner's theory was that it captured the global nature of the phenomenon very well. Yet it did not seem to adequately cover the nationalist experiences of the colonial societies of Asia and Africa. Indeed it could be said that his theory had been constructed almost entirely on the basis of Western European experiences and then universalised as valid for all of mankind. Is there a theory that can be said to have done justice to the experiences of the colonial societies? It is here that Tom Nairn comes in quite handy. In his book, *Break-Up of Great Britain*, Tom Nairn has explained nationalism as having emanated not from the industrialized European societies but from the colonial societies.

Tom Nairn is both modernist and universalist. He is modernist in the sense that he sees nationalism as a product of the last two centuries. He is universalist because he looks at nationalism as a specific feature of the general historical development of modern world. For him nationalism is an inevitable and integral consequence of a particular stage of human development. In clearer terms, Nairn

sees nationalism as a consequence of the capitalist transformation of the world and of the uneven underdevelopment inherent in capitalism. Here is the essence of his theory:

The world capitalism that emerged in certain pockets of Europe towards the end of the 18th centuries, created a 'myth' of 'even development'. The myth was that gradually capitalism would get diffused throughout the world. But in reality no such even diffusion was possible. Capitalism actually flourished by creating a 'core' (of advance capitalist countries of Europe) and a 'periphery' outside the area of the new industrial-capitalist-world economy , and at the service of the core.

The acute humiliation of unevenness was soon felt in the periphery (the colonial societies of Asia and Africa). The elite in these societies soon discovered that 'progress' in the abstract only meant 'domination' in the concrete for them. Moreover, this domination was exercised by powers that were alien and foreign. In other words capitalism created a system of imperialism and colonialism. It was in this sense that humanity's forward march became synonymous with 'Westernization'. In the colonial societies the elites discovered that they were being excluded from the new system and that their full incorporation in it was just not possible. A large majority of the people in the colonies had to be trampled over rather than initiated into the rules of the new game. They could only be exploited in the new system, not made partners in it at any stage.

So it became clear to the elites in the colonial societies that capitalism had two different faces. Whereas it brought wealth, affluence and mobility to the European world, it brought economic underdevelopment and political subjugation to the people of the colonies. Nationalism was a reaction to *this* situation. The elite in the colonial societies had to take the initiative in organising resistance to this situation of domination, exploitation and exclusion. This meant the conscious organisation, mobilisation and formation of a national community, cutting across class lines and focusing on the separate identity of this community. These elite did not have the economic and political institutions of modernity with whose help they could create this community. Therefore it had to be done on the basis of inherited past, speech, folk-lore, skin colour, etc. "The new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation card had to be written in a language they understood." Hence the focus on the language of the people. This new venture created a vertical alliance of the elite and the masses against foreign domination and united them in a common struggle to get rid of this domination. Nationalism was inherent in this process of the joint struggle of the elite and the masses against imperialism.

This really is the essence of Tom Nairn's theory. As you can see, this is essentially a modernist understanding of nationalism but very different from other modernist understandings which concentrated their attention on Europe. Tom Nairn, as you can see, is very close to the Indian experience of nationalism. His theory applies to anti-colonial nationalisms in general and Indian nationalism in particular.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that it is necessary for us to talk, not of one grand theory but, of many and different theories of nationalism. Even those who share a basic premise or concern (such as the modernists do), offer very different explanations for the phenomenon of nationalism. Some focus on ideas and doctrines and some on concrete processes. Some focus on the role and activities of groups and classes and some on structures. Some see nationalism as

emanating from within the heart of capitalism and some look at it as the consequence of the uneven spread of capitalism and as a reaction to imperialism and colonialism. This diversity in theories is quite inevitable. Nationalist experiences have been so varied that no single theory can be expected to satisfactorily provide the explanation applicable to all situations.

1.5   INDIAN NATIONALISM

What about Indian nationalism? Does it fit into the established theories or does it need a separate theory of its own? It would be best to look at Indian nationalism as a case-study of nationalism in general, but as an important and distinctive case-study. It may not be necessary to construct a separate theory of Indian nationalism, but rather that general theories of nationalism will have to be modified and tailored so as to accommodate the Indian case-study. Perhaps one should separately look at the two components of the Indian experience – the Indian component (specific) and the nationalist (generic) one. It should therefore be seen both as *Indian* nationalism and also as Indian *nationalism*.

The generic component first. It is necessary to highlight the modernity of the Indian nation. Even though India is an old civilisational society with a long continuous history of many centuries, Indian nation is a modern phenomenon. Large parts of India were ruled by many large empires in the past (Mauryan, Gupta, Mughal) and this dynastic continuity did help in the evolution if an Indian identity during the pre-modern period. Yet it would not be correct to speak of an Indian nation prior to the 19th century. So whereas an Indian society or an Indian civilization certainly existed, a national community of Indian people certainly did not. An Indian nation was made in the 19th and the 20th centuries by the ideology of Indian nationalism under conditions of British imperialism. So we can say that the general explanations of nationalism in terms of a stage of history would be relevant for an understanding of Indian nationalism too.

Indian nationalism was territorial rather than ethnic or religious. This meant that the claim to Indianness was put forward on the basis of territory and nor religion. Anyone who lived on the India soil was considered a member of the national community. It was not so much the common culture or a common language (as elucidated by Stalin's definition) that went into the making of the national community, but rather the common economic exploitation under British imperialism.

Apart from some general features, Indian nationalism also had some distinctive features of its own. In the second half of the 19th century, the Indian intelligentsia was constantly told by some British scholars, bureaucrats and ethnographers that there was not, nor could ever be, an Indian nation. One British scholar John Strachey, wrote in his book, *India: Its Administration and Progress* (1888): "This is the first and most essential thing to learn about India – that there is not and never was an India or even any country of India, possessing according to European ideas, any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious: no Indian nation, no 'people of India', of which we hear so much." Likewise John Seeley wrote in his book, *The Expansion of England* (1883): "The notion that India is a nationality rests upon that vulgar error which political science principally aims at eradication. India is not a political name, but only a geographical expression like Europe or Africa. It does not mark the territory of a nation and a language, but the territories of many nations and many languages."

It was broadly in these terms that the inherent impossibility of the Indian nation was highlighted. India was referred to as "a mere geographical expression". The British colonial discourses on India emphasized India's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and looked upon it as a barrier to the development of Indian nationhood. One way of reacting to these statements would have been to go back to the mythical unity of Indian people in the past. But the majority of Indian intellectuals refrained from replying to the 'no nation' charge with an 'always a nation' assertion. They did not go over to the other extreme. Bipan Chandra writes: "The initiators of the Indian National Movement, the 19th century intellectuals, did not deny the British assertion that India was not yet a nation. They readily accepted that India was not yet a formed nation despite common history, geography and the elements of a common culture. They also accepted that nation and nationalism had not existed in India in the past. They acknowledged the incoherence of India as also the existence of multiplicity of identities in it. They also accepted that nation was not a natural or inevitable phenomenon but was a historical creation. But they denied that India could not become a nation. They answered the imperialist taunts by claiming that historical forces were gradually bringing the Indian people together and that India had now entered the process of becoming a nation. India, they said, was a nation-in-the-making, which was the title of Surendranath Banerjee's autobiography." (Bipan Chandra, "The Making of the Indian Nation", in *Indica*, March 2004, p. 21).

And so, one important feature of the thinking of the 19th century Indian thinkers was to make a distinction between nation and civilization and highlight the novelty of the Indian nation. They argued that India was old civilization , but a new nation. Even those leaders who highlighted the superiority of Indian civilization and glorified India's past, recognized the modernity of the Indian nation. Swami Vivekanand said in 1896: "A nation is being made out of India's different races. I sometimes think they are no less various than the different peoples of Europe." The 19th century Indian leaders constantly made references to "new nation", new India, "new national spirit", "development of nationhood" etc. It can therefore be said that 'invention of tradition' as a standard nationalist device was not resorted to by the 19th century Indian nationalists. The focused on the novelty rather than the antiquity of the Indian nation. It was however later in the 20th century that some leaders considered Indian nation to be perennial and always present in Indian history. They also glorified India's past and traditions and projected them on India's present.

Apart from this feature, Indian nationalism was plural, non-coercive and civil. It was plural in the sense that the Indian nationalist leaders recognized the great Indian diversity but refused to consider it as a weakness or an obstacle that would have to go away in the journey towards nationhood. In other words, they consciously promoted the idea of the Indian nation as being based on cultural plurality rather than cultural monism. Perhaps the best statement endorsing India's plurality and linking it with nationalism came from Mahatma Gandhi who wrote in his weekly journal *Harijan* in 1940: "India is a big country, a big nation, composed of different cultures which are tending to blend with one another, each complementing the rest. If I must wait for the completion of this process, I must wait. It may not be completed in my day. I shall love to die in the faith that it must come in the fullness of time." As is clear from Gandhi's statement, the Indian nationalist leaders fully recognized that nation making for India was a long process and far from accomplished. And that India's diversity was no obstacle

in India's nationhood. Nationalism and pluralism could be combined together. When India became independent and acquired a constitution in 1950, the Constitution makers refused to recognized any single language as the national language. Rather, they enlisted 14 important Indian languages and designated all of them as official languages. The number of India's official languages has now increased to 22.

Indian nation has also been remarkably non-coercive. It is true that all nationalisms are essentially homogenizing forces and they try to create a large pool of national culture in which all local and minority cultures are expected to merge. This really is the story of most nations of the world. Indian nation by comparison was remarkable non-coercive. It was based on the idea of 'consensus' but this consensus was not to be enforced from the top. Both during the period of the anti-imperialist struggle, and during the independence period, national unity was promoted through non-coercive ways and methods.

To sum up this section, there are certain features of Indian nationalism that conform to general pattern of nationalism as illustrated in the theories. But it also has its own specific features which may not be covered by the theories. Therefore it is essential that the general theories and principles of nationalism should retain enough flexibility to be able to accommodate different and diverse nationalist experiences in different parts of the world.

1.6   SUMMARY

This Unit has highlighted some of the major explanations for the emergence of the phenomenon of nationalism. The following points have been made in the Unit:

- An elementary understanding of terms such as nation, nationalism and nation-state is absolutely essential for our enquiry. Nation should be understood as a very special and distinctive human community. Nationalism is a political principle that insists that this national community should have its own representative State. Nation-State is the example of such a State in which the State is representative of the nation and emanates from it. To put it differently, different types of human communities have dotted the earth. Nation is one such human community, but a very unique and a special one, which appeared on the scene only towards the 19th century under particular circumstances. Likewise, various kinds of state systems have made their appearance in human history. Nation-State is one such State but a very unique and a special one. Nation-States also appeared on the scene only from 19th century onwards. The linkages between the two – nation and the Nation-State – can only be understood with reference to nationalism. Nationalism brings the two together.

- The theories of nationalism can be broadly divided into modernist and non-modernist ones. The modernist theories consider nationalism to be a modern phenomenon belonging to the history of the world during the 19th and the 20th centuries. Some of the non-modernist theories tend to see nationalism as a 'natural human feeling' not requiring any particular explanation. Some others see nationalism as a prolonged evolution, spread over centuries in which various cultural or linguistic communities evolved into national communities.

- An influential modernist theory of nationalism has been provided by Ernest Gellner. Gellner locates the emergence of nationalism in the transformation of the world from agrarian to industrial. The functioning of the new industrial society was such that it necessitated the creation of large national communities. In other words there was something about the features and functioning of the industrial society that resulted in the emergence of nationalism as a force, all over the world.

- However, there was one major problem with Gellner's theory. The specific features of the industrial society, as outlined by Gellner, were fully operative only in the developed European societies. Nationalism, by contrast, emerged as a truly global force, active as much in the non-developed non-European zones of the world as in the European ones. There question therefore was: how to explain the emergence of nationalism in the countries of Asia and Africa, which had not experienced the affluence and growth brought about by industrialism?

- This question was answered by Tom Nairn, another modernist theorist of nationalism. Tom Nairn also, like Gellner, linked nationalism to the functioning o the global capitalist economy. But, unlike Gellner, he located his explanation, not in the growth, literacy and mobility of the industrial societies, but in the unevenness, dislocation and disparity created by industrialism, particularly across societies. This unevenness divided the world into a 'European core' and an 'Asian and African periphery'. In other words, capitalism created imperialism and colonialism. The elite of the periphery in particular experienced the humiliation of this unevenness. In order to counter it, they worked towards creating larger communities in unity and solidarity, cutting across lines, to fight imperialist domination. It was in this process that nationalism emerged in the colonies.

- Undoubtedly Tom Nairn's theory comes closer to the actual process in which a national community of Indian people evolved in the 19th and the 20th India. The Indian nationalist experience can be best understood f we divide it into a 'generic' and a 'specific' component. The generic component would be broadly similar to the process of nation-formation in other societies. However, the Indian experience had its own distinctive features. This Unit has highlighted both the generic and the specific features.

- To sum up, in order to properly understand and explain Indian nationalism, it is necessary to have a twin focus. One, we need to focus on the generic conditions and the unfolding of the global forces that resulted in the emergence of nationalism. At the same time, we need to focus on the specific Indian conditions that played a role in evolving a national community of the Indian people. The theories of nationalism need to take both the generic and the society-specific factors into consideration.

1.7 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the modernist theories about the emergence of nations and nationalism.

2) Critically discuss the various definitions of nations and nation-states.

3) What are the non-modernist theories of nationalism? What is their importance?

UNIT 2   ANTI-COLONIAL NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT: ASIA AND AFRICA*

Structure

2.1   Introduction

2.2   Violence and Non-Violence

2.3   Nationalist Ideologies

2.4   Intellectual and Social Origins and Visualisations of Nationalism

2.5   Nations, Nationalisms and the Partition of States

2.6   Economic Context of National Movements

2.7   Summary

2.8   Exercises

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Colonialism based on territorial conquest has become a legacy of the past but economic and military disparities between the former colonies and the metropolitan powers are substantial even today. The history of the struggle against colonial rule is important not merely to understand the evolution of countries in Africa and Asia but also the regimes that emerged after independence. A comparative study of anti-colonial movements is easier now on the basis of the published works available. In this Unit, we will discuss the growth of anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa.

2.2   VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

Although there were a few straightforward armed struggles against colonial rule the primarily non-violent struggle led by the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi was indeed an exception in the history of anti-colonial struggles. The struggles against the French and subsequently the Americans in Vietnam took the course of a violent liberation movement. The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States of America as the defender of the free world introduced a measure of conflict in anti-colonial movements after World War II that was absent in the case of those countries that had gained independence during the late 1940s. India and China managed to choose their paths of development after prolonged struggles against foreign domination before the cold war began in earnest. Even smaller countries managed to avoid the consequences of cold war rivalry like Sri Lanka and Burma during the late 1940s. Vietnam and Korea, however, were divided as a result of superpower rivalry after the USA decided to stop peasant armies from bringing communists to power.

The history of liberation struggles has been shaped by two decisive factors. One was the extent of leeway left by the colonial power for the colonized to express their nationalist aspirations through open and legitimate channels. The British

---

* Resource Person: Dr. Rohit Wanchoo

set up representative or consultative bodies that allowed for more moderate forms of anti-colonial politics to flourish and compete with the more militant expressions of nationalism. The French in many of their colonies did not evolve such mechanism, and the absence of any space for moderate and constitutional politics led to the emergence of the Vietnamese liberation struggle under Ho Chi Minh. In China the defeat of the communist party in the urban centres led Mao to build his base in the rural areas during the 1930s. A powerful and predominantly peasant armed struggle against Japanese aggression (1937-1945), based on a class coalition dominated by the communists, emerged under Mao-tse-Tung. The opportunities for more liberal and moderate politics in China were absent and so the movement took a more radical turn than in India.

The second factor in the anti-colonial struggles was the role of external interventions during the cold war. There were countries that fell clearly under one sphere of influence but there were many that were the arenas of contestation. In Malaya the British stayed on to crush the communist movement and in North Korea and North Vietnam the communists assumed complete control under independent leaders with support from China and the USSR. In many countries there were struggles to dominate the national movement and after the Sino-Soviet split of the mid 1960s there were pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese factions in the liberation struggles of many African countries like Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. The fate of many small nations was often determined by super power rivalry and negotiation and not the strength of their anti-colonial movements.

The role of external factors in attaining national independence cannot be underestimated. Developments in Paris and Lisbon determined the outcome of struggles in French Algeria and Portuguese Angola and Mozambique. If there had not been changes in the political equations in France in 1958 and Portugal in 1974 the liberation of colonies in Africa would have been a more long drawn affair, although their struggles had been long and bloody enough. The decolonisation of Africa was influenced by developments in the metropolis just as the partition of Africa was after the Berlin Conference in 1885. The movements for independence in Dutch Indonesia, British Malaya and French Indo-China gained momentum because of the victorious sweep of Japanese armies in their regions. The strength of national liberation struggles is not belittled by acknowledging the tremendous economic and political consequences of the Second World War for the colonial powers in East and South Asia.

The colonial powers had divided up many parts of the world without regard to the ethnic, linguistic or religious attributes of their colonised subjects. The boundaries were drawn up in a way that militated against the earlier conceptions of shared or overlapping sovereignty in many regions. In the late 19th century, after the period of conflict between 1885-1893, the French forced the Thai king to part with a large part of the territories that he claimed but the process of defining clear boundaries based on maps and sovereignty also enabled him to assert greater control over the territories that remained a part of his kingdom. The colonial powers deliberately encouraged Arab nationalism to weaken the Ottoman Empire during the first two decades of the twentieth century, but the boundaries of the Arab states that they created by 1921 after its dismemberment have remained more or less unaltered. The unification of Egypt and Syria, partly spurred by pan-Arabism, was short-lived lasting from 1958 to 1961. Nationalism

involved the sharper definition of territory and identity and often led to violence or suppression of minorities. Internal colonialism provoked national movements against states that had emerged successful after anti-colonial struggles. Bangladeshi nationalism triumphed in 1971 but the Kurds have had little success against the Turks or Iraqis.

2.3 NATIONALIST IDEOLOGIES

In a celebrated work, *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson, it has been argued that the idea of the nation and nation-state in its modular form developed in France after the Revolution of 1789. It then spread across the globe with the aid of print capitalism and elites promoting national languages and sometimes creating national languages along the way. Partha Chatterjee has critiqued this derivative discourse of nationalism. According to him, nationalist ideas in India developed in the private and more spiritual domain shielded from the dominant western discourse in the public sphere. The 'construction' of the imagined community has also been questioned. Elements of ethnicity or race cannot be the products of shared imagination alone. The latter view has been advocated by S.A. Smith. Nationalisms can emerge based on one or more elements – language, ethnicity, citizenship and even religion. Scholars differentiate between primordialist and civic nationalisms, cultural and constitutional nationalisms and exclusive and assimilationist nationalisms based on historical evidence.

The ideology of Indian nationalism for the most part was concerned with an economic critique of British rule in India as in Naoroji's *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*. During the late 19th century the element of cultural nationalism too emerged and influenced a small but significant number of people during the anti-colonial struggle. The element of racial antagonism was much less evident in India than in other countries and certainly less so than in Africa. The absence of significant number of white settlers in India, unlike Algeria, Kenya and South Africa, partly accounts for this. Another factor was the historical experience of slavery in Africa: the large scale export of slaves to the New World by Europeans, sometimes in collaboration with local African elites and Arab traders. The white settlers were responsible for creating a strong element of racial antagonism against the white man because they appropriated the best lands for cultivation and the most hospitable areas for habitation. The European powers were responsible for creating racial barriers throughout the colonial world but in Africa these often took more extreme forms. This was particularly true of countries like Algeria, Rhodesia and South Africa. Therefore the economic critique of colonialism was often overshadowed by the critique of white rule and racism as in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth.*

In all the countries that came under colonial rule there emerged a clear distinction between the rulers and the colonized. The entire literature that flourished after the publication of Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 has been concerned with the unequal power relations between the colonizing power and the colonized people and the construction of both the Orient and the Occident, perceptions of the Other also fashioning conceptions about the Self. European perceptions of Indian society and culture whether by the more flattering Orientalist admirers of ancient Indian literature and religion like William Jones or the more dismissive Utilitarians like Mill or condescending Anglicists like Macaulay were part of the same discourse that in a way Orientalized India. The great veneration for the wisdom of the

Vedic texts and Aryan culture shaped Indian responses to European cultural domination. It gave a great impetus to reform of Hinduism as well as a measure of cultural confidence to the Hindu middle classes in their struggle against European cultural domination.

In the case of Indian Muslims the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the eclipse of Muslim powers after the 18th century quickened a spirit of revivalism and of Pan-Islamism. Shah Wali-Ullah, Syed Ahmed Barelvi, Jalaluddin Afghani, the Ali brothers and even Mohammad Iqbal contributed to these trends. Syed Ahmad Khan and Mohammad Ali Jinnah were concerned with the political and economic rights of the Muslims in the subcontinent and were willing to mobilize their community in whatever way they could, even accepting help offered by the British rulers. Religion in the subcontinent has been a very important factor in shaping political identities and nationalism. Identities based on language and region and caste developed too but the identities based on religion became predominant during the closing years of colonial rule and led eventually to the partition of India in 1947. The role of religion has been underestimated in Anderson's emphasis on the construction of national identities based on language. Print capitalism, communitarian competition and colonial policies of divide-and-rule worked to give religious identities the overdetermining role in late colonial India.

In many countries with an overwhelming Muslim population or with a significant Muslim minority religion has played a prominent role in developing responses to European cultural and political domination. In Indonesia the growth of nationalism was linked to a kind of Muslim identity although the Sarekat Islam did not have the influence that similar parties have wielded in South Asia and West Asia. The difference can be attributed to the presence of other religious groups in Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia as well as a milder form of Islam practiced by these Muslim communities far removed from the heartland of Islam in the Arab world. The memories of the Arab conquest of Spain – which inspired the Andalusian novel in Arab literature – have not been a factor in this part of the world. The principles of Panchshila as enunciated in August 1945 dropped all reference to religion to achieve "solid unity" in Indonesia. Sukarno, and subsequently Suharto, endorsed a broadly secular form of nationalism. Also the rise of communist movements in Indonesia and Malaysia before they achieved independence indicates the presence of alternative ideologies. Retreating colonial powers ensured the success of anti-communist nationalists in these countries. Some Arab leaders like Bourguiba of Tunisia thought nationalism was the best antidote against communism because it promoted the interests of the people as a whole. In the West Asian region the colonial powers exercised dominion but did not often set down deep roots. Iraq was under formal colonial rule for a brief period after World War I until 1932 although it was under neo-colonial influence until 1958. Iran too had to endure informal imperialism but not direct colonial rule. Arab nationalism emerged with the development of pan-Arabism, but there was no demand for a single united Arab state. The earliest pan-Arabists conceived of at least three Arab states east of Suez-Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. The existence of twenty odd Arab states following colonial wars and the post World War I settlement added the more pervasive influence of local loyalties based on nation-state sponsored nationalism. Arab nationalism was based on tradition as well as new uses of tradition. The achievements of thirteen centuries of Islamic civilisation came to be regarded as those of Arab civilization. Even if Islam and Arabism were not identical they were not perceived as antagonistic to

each other. While in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula Islam played an important role in the development of nationalism this was not true of the central lands of Islam like Egypt and the Crescent which had substantial Arab Christian populations. Advanced conceptions of Arab nationalism developed in Iraq during the 1930s and 1940s, in Syria during the 1950s, and in Egypt during the 1960s. Secularism and socialism too played a role in shaping the ideology of Arab nationalism. Also there has been a prolonged conflict between the Islamic revivalists and the nationalists in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon.

The Turkish people were ruled by a modernizer like Mustafa Kemal who abolished the position of the Khalifa, the religious head of the Muslim community, even while Indian Muslims protested against the treatment of Turkey and the Khalifa. A scholar has found some similarities in the developments in Kemalist Turkey and those in Soviet Central Asia during the 1920s and 1930s – in terms of modernisation and secularisation from above by an elite, spread of literacy, improvement in the position of women and adoption of the Roman script to develop the national language. The subordination of religion to the state in Turkey was carried out by the introduction of a uniform civil code based on that of Switzerland in 1926. As part of the nationalisation of Islam the Quran was translated into Turkish in 1933 for the first time. During the 1990s there was an attempt to reconfigure nationalism in terms of an Ottoman-Islamic tradition by commemorating the victory of the Ottomans against the Christian West at Constantinople in 1453. In any case religious nationalism in a regressive form became more significant in the Islamic world only after the upsurge against the Shah of Iran in 1979. In the earlier period nationalist elites had supported progressive leaders like Bourgiba of Tunisia, Baath Socialist parties in Syria and Iraq and patriotic leaders like Mossadegh in Iran and Nasser in Egypt.

2.4 INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL ORIGINS AND VISUALISATIONS OF NATIONALISM

The origins of nationalism in many countries were closely related to the contacts that small minorities in Africa and Asia developed with Europeans whether missionaries, travellers, scholars or traders. Nationalists, when they articulated nationalism, would go back to the ancient period of their history but the development of nationalism was intimately connected with the interaction with Europeans. It is not necessary to argue that the initial interactions produced any spirit of nationalism; what this period did was to create a group of people who could absorb ideas about nations and nationalism. The British conquest of Bengal in the mid-eighteenth century created the basis for a new class of people tied to British interests and by the early nineteenth century a stratum inspired by western ideas of liberalism and culture. The Young Bengal movement and intellectuals like Ram Mohan Roy and Bankim Chandra grappled with western domination and articulated indigenous responses to it. It was only in 1885 that the Indian National Congress was formed by westernized Indians.

China was never fully colonized and even the Japanese were unable to go beyond the territories of eastern China, substantial though these regions were. The Chinese had some of the attributes of nationalism even before the modern era because they had developed wood-block printing, had a large bureaucracy recruited through public examinations and a centralized state. The Chinese historian Liang

Qichao early in the twentieth century anticipated Anderson's concept of the imagined community itself. Modern China's conception of nationalism was based on Han primacy although the Chinese communists believed in safeguarding the interests of the national minorities in China. Unlike the Soviet Union, China never offered the right of secession to the national minorities. This was partly because Chinese communists did not need the support of the minorities to fight for freedom or socialism. After the Japanese invasion the Kuomintang and the Communist party were able to accept similar views about the Chinese nation or *zhonghua minzu*: the centrality of the Han people and the inclusion of non-Han borderlands within China. While the Kuomintang called the national minorities clans, the communists were prepared to call them nationalities. All that these nationalities could claim, however, was equality within the nation not the right to secession.

There are problems in identifying the nature of nationalities and nationalism in East Asia which are the product of long term historical factors and also recent state practices. The Vietnamese language has a high proportion of Chinese words because of prolonged contact rather than any genetic connection with the Chinese language. In standard Thai considerable vocabulary is derived from Khmer, which in turn draws on Sanskrit, and these three languages are genetically unrelated to each other. The Kachin in Burma developed an ethnic identity largely as a result of politics, not any essential characteristics based on language or ethnicity. Biology and spoken language were less important in shaping differences in the pre-colonial period compared to differences based on locality, kinship and Buddhist or Chinese traditions. Only after the border regions of empires were brought within well defined borders of countries by the early twentieth century that the modern states in East Asia became involved in ethnic classifications. The Han Chinese had regarded other nationalities as barbarians and the Qing and Republican Chinese recognized five major 'races' in China. The ethnic classification or *minzu shibie* in 1962 put all the *minzu* on an equal footing within the Chinese nation. Although about four hundred groups were identified on the basis of difference only fifty six *minzu* were recognized. The Chinese also built up the claims of groups designated the Zhuang in Guangzi and Yunnan by encouraging this identity and allowing them to link up with the Tai-speaking groups of Vietnam and Cambodia. The state plays an important role in promoting claims of minorities or in modifying their rights and claims.

In West Africa the colonial intelligentsia began to emerge during the 1840s. Saro pioneers (people of Yoruba descent, liberated slaves educated in Sierra Leone) who settled in Nigeria in 1839 were not the ones who brought European education to the region. The notables of the coast had hired teachers to get the necessary education to profit from the trade of the Atlantic economy from the sixteenth century onwards. Freetown and Lagos drew people from diverse backgrounds. Freedmen from Brazil and the Caribbean, American blacks from Liberia, Jamaican maroons, and indigenous Mende and Temne contributed to the educated community. The Fourah Bay College set up in 1827 in Sierra Leone to train Africans to work for the Church Missionary Society played an important role in West Africa. Links to "the culture of the Black Atlantic" dominated intellectual life until late in the 19th century. Although their numbers were not large the West African intelligentsia had emerged earlier than in other regions.

Many members of the West African intelligentsia were deeply influenced by Christianity and sought to find their place as Africans within the framework of the European civilizing mission. The development of African cultural identity and nationalism was influenced by the spread of Christianity in many regions. This set it apart from the Arab and Muslim world as also South and South East Asia. The African nationalism or cultural self assertion took the form of creating African controlled churches with diverse ideologies. In 1937 Lord Hailey in a survey of nationalism saw these black churches as the indicators of a kind of national awakening. It has been argued that although Christian missionaries provided a common language for educated members of different tribes in West Africa they wanted to mould the Africans to suit the interests of the colonizers. The Christian Churches were European dominated and did not deal with the Africans as equals although the access to western education and the Bible added to their self-worth and sharpened a sense of justice. This initially led to the proliferation of splinter African churches and then the denial of equality led them to turn towards nationalism. A more generalized argument has been that while the Christian missionaries opened up the prospects of a wider world they did not actually bring the Africans closer to achieving what they offered in terms of western capitalist culture. This gap between what they seemed to offer and what actually came to pass produced a range of responses from resistance to more overt forms of rebellion. African nationalism was quickened partly by this process.

The inspiration for nationalism has come from turning to the past achievements of the nation or the inner or spiritual life of the people based on religion or culture. In Africa people outside Egypt were proud of the achievements of Pharonic Egypt and the Nile civilisation, but also of traditional tribal culture. Early nationalists discovered and highlighted the strengths of traditional religion or culture. In Thailand, which was not colonized, there was a preoccupation with the idea of civilization and the appropriation from the west of those ideas that were relevant for a civilized life. The west was setting new standards of civilisation as once India and China had. The Sanskrit word for civilisation invented during the 19th century – *Arayatham [araya+ dhamma]* – did not take off. *Siwilai*, an adaptation of the word from English or *charoen*, a fourteenth century Khmer word, became far more popular.

In the ethnic interpretation of nationalism the Vietnamese nation had emerged almost a thousand years ago in opposition to Chinese rule, but those who believed in communal solidarity of the village community highlighted its role in linking up with both nationalism and communism in various ways in the 20th century. The idea of Annam or Indochina rather than Vietnamese nationalism inspired Nguyen An Ninh and others during the 1920s but it eventually lost out. Contemporary scholars explore Vietnamese history from the standpoint of the Cham, Khmer, Moung, Chinese and not merely the Kinh. The internal divisions among the Vietnamese and not merely their united struggle against foreign powers are now subjects of study.

2.5 NATIONS, NATIONALISMS AND THE PARTITION OF STATES

The incorporation of vast territories in Asia and Africa by the colonial powers was a long drawn process without any method in the mad scramble for colonies.

There were economic reasons for acquiring colonies and also strategic considerations which led to annexations. The partition of the non-European world was also carried out to acquire territories that were likely to be of value in the future or simply to prevent a rival from extending his sway in a region. The countries created because of these factors often lacked anything in common except the ruling power. The anti-colonial movements in countries carved out of vast unexplored territories, particularly in Africa, lacked any clear basis for the articulation of a national movement. The boundaries had been drawn arbitrarily by diplomatic negotiations in European capitals and systems of rule introduced with little regard for the tribal, linguistic or ethnic identities of the inhabitants. The national movements were based on the bonds of colour or black racial identity. National movements based on identity of race were, however, undermined by identities based on tribe, religion and language.

In West Africa the struggle of the Nigerian nationalists against British rule was partly undermined because of the division between the predominantly Christian south of the country and the Muslim dominated northern region. Ethnic divisions provoked the Igbo to secede soon after independence. After a bloody civil war between 1967 and 1970 Biafra was reincorporated in Nigeria. In East Africa the Mau Mau uprising brought out the ethnic tensions in the country and helped the Kikuyu move from a subordinate position to one of dominance. Those who fought the colonial rulers were often subjected to severe repression and ethnic differences were exploited to perpetuate colonial rule. The Africans have found it easier to create Pan-African ideologies based on shared blackness or Negritude as articulated by Leopold Senghor, Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta than to unite individual countries ignoring tribal identities. The colonial powers too encouraged secessionist demands for economic reasons. Belgian Congo was divided so that the resources of Katanga could be more easily controlled. The division of territories in West Asia was fraught with great difficulties because the discovery of oil in the region had made it a vital matter for major corporations and the colonial powers. Kuwait was carved out as an independent country allegedly to weaken the bargaining power of the oil producing states. The politics of decolonization bears the stamp of an implicit or explicit struggle to control the resources of the colonies as well as estimations of the gains from formal empire.

A recent study has asserted that the British adopted a strategy in Africa that was designed to prevent an anti-colonial coalition of the kind that developed in India. The British adopted a policy of divide and rule and tried to play off one ethnic group against the other, a policy that was also pursued in India. The British recruited disproportionately from the Tiv in Nigeria, Acholi in Uganda and the Kamba in Kenya for the military. In Africa British policy was to rule indirectly through traditional structures of authority which were only subordinated to colonial interests, not undermined or destroyed. On the other hand the French, who believed in greater centralisation of power and incorporation of colonial subjects within Greater France, destroyed traditional social structures. They also promoted an elite based on acceptance of French language and culture disregarding earlier status rankings. Thus the British produced an unranked system of ethnic stratification unlike the French. This allowed ethnic competition under the British which intensified after the colonies became independent. The traditional structures allowed disaffected ethnic groups to organize effectively against oppressive elites in the post-colonial period in the former British colonies.

On the basis of data relevant to 48 countries the study has concluded that the former British colonies were marked by more conflict even though grievances were higher in the former French colonies.

It is arguable that the exploitation of ethnic differences in British colonies has been underestimated by this study. The British divided Ireland, India, and Palestine before they handed over power to nationalist leaders. Although the British often divided their colonies before they quit them they were more willing to withdraw peacefully from their colonies than the French. The former colonies, both British and French, tried to create federations with or without support from the retreating colonial power. After the Central African Federation created in 1963 failed Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya went their separate ways. Federations often failed because of the anxieties of the more developed national group that it would have to bear the burden of the less developed regions. Gabon had these fears about the Central African Republic that four French colonies tried to set up. Cote d' Ivoire in West Africa and Kenya in East Africa were wary of federation for the same reasons.

In South Asia after World War II the strength of the national movement and the breakdown of colonial authority and inter-community relations made a policy of retreat appear eminently sensible. The Labour leadership of Britain was willing to see the writing on the wall but only in South Asia. In the African colonies the British thought it worth their while to focus on Empire Development schemes to link the colonies to the metropolis and to use their resources to shore up the Sterling Area created during the economic crisis of the inter-war period. The tin, rubber, cocoa, tea and other products of empire were still useful in post-war British recovery and the elites were not willing to recognize the 'winds of change' until the 1960s. The defeat in the Suez crisis of 1956, marked by the fall of the British Prime Minister Anthony Eden and the vindication of the nationalist policy of Abdul Nasser of Egypt, helped the British come to grips with their vanishing imperial role. Formal rule and informal systems of domination were no longer options for the former colonial powers in the world order emerging during the cold war period. The two superpowers dominated although the non-aligned countries under Nasser, Nehru and Tito tried to retain their autonomy.

Notions of nationalism were promoted by the colonial powers and post colonial elites according to various economic and strategic considerations that sometimes brought them together. The idea of Greater Malaysia was promoted by the British after the Malay leader Tanku Abdul Rehman supported the notion in 1961. Although the Tanku did not particularly want Singapore as part of greater Malaysia he had to go along with the plan to secure the resources of Sarawak and Sabah in Borneo. Thus Malaya that had achieved independence in 1957 accepted Singapore and the Borneo territories as part of Malaysia in 1963. Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore went along with the British strategic plan to protect their interests during the cold war because he too wanted to thwart the rise of communism. Thus the fear of communism helped to sustain a federation that had little to do with grassroots support, although Singapore itself pulled out in 1965. Nationalism did not always play a role in the creation of nation-states or political formations.

The impact of the cold war on decolonization is complex. In some ways it led to the mistaken perception in the west that the autonomous national movements in Asia and Africa were the subordinate allies, or worse still, the stooges of Soviet

and Chinese sponsors. In some countries the colonial powers retreated because they did not want the more radical elements in society to come anywhere near power. Metropolitan economic interests could be more effectively defended by handing over power to pliant nationalist elites dependent on external support than to more independent or pro-socialist leaders. The emergence of several military dictatorships in Africa reflected the sharp polarization in societies during the cold war- reducing the middle ground for moderate reformers and democratic socialists.

2.6 ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

It has been an acknowledged fact that the possession of colonies was a matter of great economic importance. The motives for colonial expansion were the search for raw materials, markets for industrial products and opportunities for profitable investments. In so far as natural resources are concerned both in Asia and Africa there is overwhelming evidence to support the case of exploitation. The political tribute to Britain and the famous 'drain of wealth' from India was not a phenomenon confined to India. It has been argued that the Netherlands East Indies developed the 'Cultivation System' to export the agricultural commodities from the resource rich Indonesian archipelago to the markets in the west. Arguably, the transfer of resources to the metropolitan power from Indonesia was greater than from India for over half a century. The Dutch took away 17% of the Indonesian national product, which amounted to 8% of Dutch domestic product, during 1921-38. The exploitation of the natural resources of the Asian economies was not confined to the European powers alone. The Japanese exploited the resources of Korea, Manchuria and later China.

The export of industrial goods was dependent on the economic development of the colonial world and the possibilities for export of goods. The intense exploitation of peasant producers reduced their purchasing power and made it difficult to expand the market for manufactured goods from the metropolitan countries. The effort to retain a dominant market share in the colonial countries led many colonizers to try and prevent the development of indigenous industries as well. This was done primarily by following a policy of free trade during the 19th century when Britain was the leading exporter of textiles, railway equipment, steel and machinery. The new industries like chemicals, electricity and motor transport were less dependent on colonial markets in Asia and Africa but they became steadily more important. In countries like India, South Africa and even smaller countries the indigenous manufacturing class became resentful of colonial monopolies and domination and promoted economic nationalism and the struggle for national independence.

In many countries of Africa the development of the indigenous capitalist class was not very significant until after World War II and they did not have a 'national bourgeoisie' trying to use nationalist political pressures to secure more suitable tariff, currency and monetary policies. Where colonialism had a less disruptive role both economic and political progress could be achieved. The pre-colonial culture of the Tswana tribes which led to the institutionalization of property rights in cattle but also progressively in land, a favourable orientation towards the market economy and greater inter-ethnic cooperation enabled Botswana to

achieve remarkable growth rates after independence. Traditional Tswana culture with its "integrative political institutions" survived but similar institutions among the Barotse in Zambia and Bophuthatswana in South Africa collapsed because of a more disruptive colonial impact.

Although some indigenous industries benefitted by the decline in imports from metropolitan countries during the depression years of the 1930s import substitution industrialisation worked only for a handful of countries like India, South Africa and Australia. The key fact to note is that the experience of the drain of wealth and the collaboration of many sections of the indigenous elites with the process of colonial exploitation pushed many anti-colonial movements in an anti-capitalist, anti-landlord or anti-elite direction. High land revenue assessments, railway building beyond indigenous requirements and resources, the political alliance of colonial rulers with exploitative indigenous elites and the forced or market driven commercialisation of agriculture led to economic exploitation, low per capita incomes and disastrous famines. The common people suffered immense hardships during the depression years of the 1930s. The loss of economic opportunities and well-being propelled many poor peasants and ordinary people to join forces with nationalists trying to fight colonial systems of economic exploitation. In many parts of Africa there was growing dependence for food on the adaptation of maize to local conditions, particularly during the last hundred years. The dangers of this over dependence on maize would only manifest itself many years after these countries had gained independence.

It was proposed by Ali Mazrui in the early 1980s that in Africa the evolution of social classes had not advanced sufficiently in the period leading up to independence. Kin and clan based ethnic and tribal identities played a greater role in shaping popular movements than inadequately articulated class identities. The struggle against colonial exploitation and the exploitation of the resources by European business interests and white settlers led to economic resentments and racial animosities. The mobilisation of the masses in some of the African countries might have been lower than in India during the national movement but exploitation was equally strongly felt by those who participated in the struggles for independence. The relative weakness of the anti-colonial struggles in many African countries might have enabled the retreating colonial powers to retain greater economic control over the economies of the post colonial countries than in the case of India. Yet it must not be assumed that all the struggles were nationalist in nature, or that an anti-colonial attitude inevitably led to participation in nationalist struggles. In many countries ordinary people had to endure hardships without being able to join movements whether based on class, ethnicity or religion. This was true of large countries like China and Indonesia as well as smaller ones.

Nationalism arose with the development of social classes associated with the rise of capitalism as propounded by Stalin and Soviet nationality theory of his time. Gellner argued that it was linked to the rise of industrialization and the need to bind society replacing loyalties to clans and kinship by loyalty to the state. In most Afro-Asian nations industrialisation was not sufficiently advanced to play a vital role in promoting nationalism. Agrarian capitalism and the elites who profited by the commercialisation of agriculture often played a role in promoting nationalism. In Egypt and Iraq the powerful landlords- not more than two to three thousand families- played a role in promoting nationalism and in

preventing the emergence of powerful peasant movements through hacienda type estates and repression backed by the state. In Turkey and Iran too those who controlled and owned land and engaged in production for the world market became supporters of national movements to acquire greater control over domestic resources. Of course the educated middle classes played a key role in most national movements. In fact in order to promote industrialisation the educated middle class often turned towards socialism and communism.

In India the peasant movements often slipped out of the control of those organizations that sought to keep them within the confines of a broad based national movement. Many spontaneous movements of the peasants and tribals remained outside the mainstream national movement. Nevertheless the Indian national movement was sufficiently broad based. Although the upper sections of the peasantry identified more closely with the Gandhian programme and method of struggle the national movement was much more a multi-class movement providing the basis for a successful democracy based on adult franchise in the post independence period. In China the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance succeeded on the basis of a peasant based movement that included patriotic landlords based on the experience of the Chinese Communist party in Yenan. The Chinese movement was based on Mao's idea of a popular front against imperialism based on the ideas of New Democracy. Nationalism and socialism became closely inter-twined. Although the Chinese Red Army under Zhang Guotao created six soviet regimes among the Tibetans during 1935-36 based on class struggle this was not mainstream official policy.

In the countries where the spirit of economic nationalism was stronger and the mass base of nationalism greater, economic development after independence was probably higher. This was complicated by the logic of the cold war in the case of East Asia where United States' investments in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan led to high growth rates. Foreign investments accelerated growth in the context of agrarian reforms, public investment in education and export oriented development. By contrast in Africa the cold war did not have such positive consequences in the context of military dictatorships, illiteracy and ethnic conflicts. Even so, the eventual transfer of power in Zimbabwe to the radical Robert Mugabe in 1980, a leader the British conservative government under Margaret Thatcher did not favour, produced a relatively stable government for two decades.

In South Africa which had actually become independent under its white elite early and had imposed apartheid in 1948, the armed struggle spearheaded by the African National Congress led to black majority rule eventually under Nelson Mandela. The struggle against the racist regime cannot be viewed simply in terms of nationalism since the anti-racist struggle did not always take a nationalist form; there were traces of socialism, tribalism and religious sentiment. Further there were different conceptions of nationalism – of the four separate nations consisting of the Blacks, the Coloureds, Asians and the whites recognized by the Congress Alliance because the masses were not ready for a purely anti-racial struggle against apartheid. The economic sanctions against South Africa weakened the resolve of the Afrikaners to retain the system of apartheid as did the struggle of the nationalist groups in South Africa itself. There is enough ground to believe that the relatively peaceful transfer of power to the prisoner of Robben Island may have been made in order to protect the economic position of the powerful

mining interests and foreign companies with a stake in the country and that the
ANC went along with it in order to ensure the continued prosperity of South
Africa under its new black leadership. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission
assuaged racial antagonisms and facilitated this relatively peaceful transition to
black majority rule.

2.7 SUMMARY

The historical record does not support any simple theory explaining either the
rise of nationalities or national movements or the policy towards them of colonial
and post-colonial elites and states. Nationalism is not necessarily connected to
capitalist development or industrialisation although they do create the basis for
national mobilisation. Language and print capitalism do play a prominent role in
the rise of nationalism, but in many cases nationalist elites have promoted the
spread of national languages and public education to spread the spirit of
nationalism after creating a nation-state. Languages are not always the basis of
nationalism since religion has also promoted nationalism. Religious nationalism
has been important in many Middle-Eastern countries although other strands of
nationalism and other ideologies also co-exist even in this region. Nationalism
and the accompanying emphasis on borders, sovereignty and singular identities
creates national minorities and sub-national or alternative nationalist ideologies.

Nationalism is a modern ideology which is 'constructed' but cannot be entirely
an act of imagination. Ethnicities and languages are themselves products of
historical evolution. The alliances forged during the period of nationalist
mobilisation and the subsequent policies of the post-colonial states shape the
evolution of nationalities. The rise of nationalism cannot be understood in terms
of the opposition between western and indigenous sources of nationalism. The
elements that go into making nationalities are subject to long term evolution and
the impact of mass mobilisation and state practices. Outside the historical context
it is not possible to understand the rise and growth of nationalism in Asia and
Africa or anywhere in the world.

2.8 EXERCISES

1) Why did some national liberation movements stick to the path of non-violent
   struggles while others resorted to violence to counter the colonial rule?

2) Discus the intellectual and social origins of nations in Asia and Africa.

3) Discuss the economic contexts of some nationalist movements.

UNIT 3   PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN NATIONALISM – I*

Structure

3.1   Introduction

3.2   Colonialist Perspective

3.3   Nationalist Views

3.4   Marxist Approaches

3.5   Summary

3.6   Exercises

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous Units, you have read about the views on rise and growth of nationalism in Europe, Africa and various parts of Asia. In this Unit and the next one, we will discuss various approaches to the study of nationalism in India. These viewpoints range over a period of more than a century and have multiple points of agreements and disagreements with each other. In this Unit, we will discuss the colonialist, nationalist and Marxist perspectives on Indian nationalism.

3.2   COLONIALIST PERSPECTIVE

The colonialist paradigm on Indian history was given a mature form during the nineteenth century. Beginning with James Mill's *History of India*, the colonialist view could be found in the works of many English historians. Mountstuart Elphinstone, Henry Elliot and John Dowson, W.W. Hunter, and Vincent Smith were some important historians who provided overarching interpretations of Indian history. The colonialist view rejected the idea of India as a nation. The diversity and disunity of India were always emphasized by the colonialist thinkers as justification for the colonial rule which was considered to have united it. Right since early days of colonial rule, India was depicted as a land of hostile and warring units. W.W. Hunter, Herbert Risley and many others emphatically attempted to prove it by segregating and classifying the country in innumerable tribes and castes. When the Indian national movement began emerging in the late nineteenth century and matured during the twentieth century, the famous British historians such a John Strachey and John Seeley asserted that it was impossible to forge a nation in India because it has never had the characteristics of a nation nor it could ever have it in future. According to them, India was a conglomeration of different and often antagonistic religious, ethnic, linguistic and regional groups which could never be welded into a nation.

With the rise of the nationalist movement and the nationalist assertion of the existence of an Indian nation, it became even more necessary for the colonialist ideologues and historians to counter it. This they did by downgrading it as an agitation by some selfish members of the middle classes or the Bengali *Babus*. The strongest statement in this regard was provided by Valentine Chirol who, in

* Resource Person: Prof. S.B. Upadhyay

his *Indian Unrest* (1910), asserted that India was a 'mere geographical expression', and even this geography was forged by the British. In his view, India was a 'variegated jumble of races and peoples, castes and creeds' which could never evolve into a nation, and which, in fact, is 'an antithesis to all that the word "national" implies'. In effect, India was 'inhabited by a great variety of nation', 'there are far more absolutely distinct languages spoken in India than in Europe', and 'there are far more profound racial differences between the Maharatta and the Bengalee than between the German and the Portuguese'. It was only the British rule which 'prevents these ancient divisions from breaking out once more into open and sanguinary strife'. Thus, for him, the term 'India' was no more than a geographic creation by the British for administrative purposes.

Similarly, according to Vincent Smith, there was a basic lack of unity among the Indians. Except during brief periods of imperial rules, Indian body politic always consisted of 'mutually repellent molecules'. The lack of cohesion among the Hindu states made them 'an easy prey to fierce hordes of Arabs, Turks, and Afghans, bound together by stern fanaticism'. This situation of disunity could only be corrected when a central authority was imposed from outside, as by the British. And India would again become fragmented 'if the hand of the benevolent despotism which now holds her in its iron grasp should be withdrawn'. [For details on the colonialist historical approaches, see S.B. Upadhyay 2015].

According to these views, there was no possibility of a movement which could be called national. Even when the national movement became a pan-Indian reality as a mass movement after the First World War, the colonialist historians questioned its effectiveness and attempted to highlight the religious, caste and linguistic divisions to deny it a national character.

3.2 NATIONALIST VIEWS

Nationalist views on Indian nationalism and national movement were formed in response to the colonialist view. While the nationalist writers accepted some of the ideas present in colonialist historiography, they strongly reacted against colonialist denigration of India and its people. In contrast to the instrumentalist approach of many colonialist historians, the nationalist historians adopted an idea-centric approach. There are primarily two views among them: according to some, the nationalist ideas have been adopted under the influence of the West, while some others argue that they have been present since the ancient times. In the early phase of the national movement, the Moderate nationalists generally thought that this spirit of freedom arose primarily due to Western influences. According to these writers, Western education and ideas of liberty were basically responsible for the formation of national consciousness. Later, when the national movement intensified, writers began searching for indigenous roots of such ideas. Both these approaches to nationalism remained in the works of many nationalist historians. Sometimes the same historian would present different views in their different works. Thus, these approaches should be marked basically as ideas rather than as segregated according to historians.

In the first view, the ferment generated in India in the wake of the propagation of Western ideas prepared the English-educated middle classes to form nationalist consciousness. Their yearning for liberty and freedom strengthened their patriotic feelings. The Indian National Congress was the result of the search to find avenue

for self-expression and self-assertion. According to Bisheshwar Prasad, 'The loss of freedom and the spectre of domination by the alien…rankled in the hearts of the people', and this intense feeling was expressed in numerous revolts since the establishment of the British rule culminating in the great revolt of 1857. After that, it sought new channels to express itself. Moreover, the relatively wider spread of the later (Extremist) phase of the national movement was explained, by writer such as R.G. Pradhan, B. Prasad, R.C. Majumdar and Lajpat Rai, as a result of 'better ideas and a greater spirit of freedom, or better leaders who possessed greater zeal, sturdier patriotism and a greater will and capacity to undergo suffering and make sacrifices'. Thus, as Bipan Chandra argues, the 'liberal nationalist writers tend on the whole to base themselves on the Whig view of history and see the national movement as a result of the spread and realization of the idea or spirit of nationalism' [Bipan Chandra 1986: 199, 197]

Many Indian nationalists and nationalist historians did not consider India as a formed nation in modern times. They, in line with Surendranath Banerjea, regarded India as 'a nation-in-the-making'. According to them, the task of the national movement was to unite Indians from various regions and different walks of life into a single nation based on their common grievances. R.C. Majumdar argued that 'the conception of India as a common motherland was still in the realm of fancy. There was no India as it is understood today. There were Bengalis, Hindustanis, Marathas, Sikhs, etc. but no Indian, at the beginning of the nineteenth century'. He thought that it was the movements launched by the Congress which 'gave reality to the ideal of Indian unity'. Tara Chand also thought that creation of an Indian nation was a recent phenomenon which emerged due to 'the combined economic and political change' [cited in Bipan Chandra, 1986: 213].

However, there was another quite powerful trend which asserted that India had been a nation since the earliest times. Radha Kumud Mookerji, in his *Fundamental Unity of India* (1914) and many other works, most famously put forward the idea that India had been great and unified since ancient times. According to him, there had existed a sense of geographical unity of India since early times, and even the idea of nationalism was already present in early India. Har Bilas Sarda, in his *Hindu Superiority* (1906), declared that 'the ancient Hindus were the greatest nation that has yet flourished in the earth' [Bruce T. McCully 1935: 297]. Lajpat Rai (1865-1928) asserted in his *Young India* (1916) that 'fundamentally India has been a nation for the last 2,000 years' [cited in Bipan Chandra 1986: 214]. K.P. Jayaswal, in his *Hindu Polity* (1924), stated that India possessed everything which modern Britain could claim: big empires, enduring and successful republics, representative elective institutions, strong parliaments, a constitutional monarchy, and supremacy of Law above the executive authority.

On a different note, Rabindranath Tagore portrayed India as a civilization where various invaders, such as Greeks, Shakas, Huns, Turks, Persians, Afghans etc, came and became assimilated in its ethos enriching its culture. India was, therefore, not simply a territorial unit but possessed a much broader civilizational and cultural unity. It was in this inclusive and assimilative spirit, and not in the disruptive political strife, that Tagore located India's national identity and differentiated it from European nationalism. Along similar lines, Gandhi also visualized the India of the past and imagined an India of the future. Subhas Chandra Bose, in his *Indian Struggle*, argued that India possessed 'a fundamental unity' despite endless diversity. Jawaharlal Nehru also spoke about 'unity in

diversity' and 'a cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads'.

Besides the spirit of freedom, the nationalist historians emphasise on a variety of factors for the rise of national movement – the generally unfriendly attitude of the colonial rulers, reactionary policies of Viceroy Lytton, Ilbert Bill controversy, the modern education, printing press, modern literature, and finally the partition of Bengal. The feeling of racial superiority displayed by English people in India and the official policy of racial discrimination in certain matters humiliated the Indians and created bitterness in their minds.

The nationalist historians also underlined the economic factors which led to a feeling of disaffection among Indian people. Exploitation of peasantry, high land revenue, forced cultivation of indigo and some other cash crops, drain of wealth, wasteful expenditure of Indian revenue for maintaining a large military force to be used against the Indians or for fighting wars which did not really concern India, and so on.

The nationalist historians also pointed to the underlying contradiction between the imperialist rule and the Indian people as a whole. By doing this, they papered over all the class, caste, linguistic, regional and religious contradictions which existed in Indian society in order to portray a pan-Indian anti-imperialist front. According to nationalist historians, the national movement was a movement of all classes in Indian society. Since Indian people as a whole had contradiction with imperialism, the national movement represented the feelings of the Indian people against imperialism. As Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a prominent Congress leader, claimed: 'The Congress then is a National organization that knows no difference between British India and Indian India, between one Province and another, between classes and masses, between towns and villages, between the rich and the poor, between agricultural and industrial interests, between castes and communities, or religions' [cited in Bipan Chandra, 1986: 218-19].

The nationalist historians generally believed that the masses were not capable of independent action and were to be mobilised by the middle class leaders. Thus, Surendranath Banerjea wrote in 1911 that 'Wherever you have a middle class, you have enlightenment, freedom, progress and prosperity…. The rise of the middle class in Bengal is therefore the most remarkable and the most reassuring of the signs of the times' [cited in Rajat Ray 1983: 1]. Lajpat Rai commented that 'The masses are easily led astray by governments or by classes in league with governments. In every country it is the educated middle class that leads the movement for political independence or for political progress'. C.F. Andrews and Girija Mukerji also wrote in 1938 in their *The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India* that 'The strength of the All-India movement lay in the newly educated middle classes…. The national movement, thus begun by the Congress, represented both the social aspirations of the middle classes in India and also the supreme desire for freedom and racial justice' [cited in Bipan Chandra, 1986: 219-21].

The nationalist historians think that the nationalist leaders were dedicated idealists inspired by patriotism and the welfare of the country. Even while coming from the middle classes, the nationalist leaders, in this view, possessed no personal or group or class interests and were devoted to the cause of the nation and Indian

people. They acted as selfless spokespersons of the silent majority who could not speak on their own. They represented all classes, communities and groups and pursued national, secular and progressive politics.

3.4 MARXIST APPROACHES

The Marxist historians have been critical of both the colonialist and nationalist views on Indian nationalism. They criticise the colonialist perspective for holding a discriminatory view on India and its people, while they criticise the nationalist commentators for seeking the roots of nationalism in ancient past. They criticise both for not paying attention to economic factors and class differentiation in their analysis of the phenomenon of nationalism.

The Marxist paradigm is based on the analysis of the modes of production and classes. The Marxist historians perceive that there was a basic contradiction between imperialism and the Indian society. But they also do not ignore the class-contradiction within the Indian society. They try to explain these processes with reference to the economic changes under colonialism. And finally, they believe that India was not always a nation but rather a nation which was being created in modern times in which the nationalist movement had an important role to play.

It is by the application of these analytical categories of class and mode of production that M.N. Roy, a great figure in the national and international communist movement during the 1920s, placed the Indian nationalist movement within a universalistic framework. In his book, *India in Transition* (1922), he argued that this movement had developed at a certain juncture in the development of international capitalism. He was of the opinion that India was moving towards capitalism and had already come within the ambit of global capitalism. Thus, the dominant classes in India were not feudal lords but the bourgeoisie. In the context of feudal dominance, the emerging national bourgeoisie is often revolutionary. However, in India, since feudalism was approaching its end, the bourgeoisie had turned conservative in nature and wanted to preserve the existing order. In this situation, only the workers would be revolutionary.

On the issue of Indian nationalism, Roy believed that it was the political ideology of native capitalism which developed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the shadow of imperialism. It matured along with the growth of native capital after the First World War. This period also witnessed the rise of the Indian National Congress. Thus, for Roy, Indian national movement represented the 'political ideology and aspiration of a youthful bourgeoisie' [cited in Rajat Ray 1983: 5].

About 25 years later, R.P. Dutt formulated the most influential Marxist interpretation of Indian nationalism in his famous book *India Today* (1947). Dutt held that the revolt of 1857 'was in its essential character and dominant leadership the revolt of the old conservative and feudal forces and dethroned potentates'. Thus it is only from the last quarter of the 19th century that Dutt traced the beginning of the Indian national movement. The Indian National Congress, established in 1885, was the main organisation of this movement. Dutt believed that although the previous activities of the Indian middle classes formed the background, the Congress came into existence 'through the initiative and under the guidance of direct British governmental policy, on a plan secretly

pre-arranged with the Viceroy as an intended weapon for safeguarding British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest and anti-British feeling.' However, Dutt argues that, owing to pressure of popular nationalist feelings, the Congress slowly abandoned its loyalist character and adopted a national role. This resulted in its transformation as a strong anti-colonial force which began to lead people's movement against colonial rule.

Applying the Marxist class analysis to the study of Indian nationalism, he argues that the class base of the Congress and the national movement changed over the period. Thus, in the initial years, Indian nationalism represented 'only big bourgeoisie – the progressive elements among the landowners, the new industrial bourgeoisie and the well-to-do intellectual elements'. Later, in the years preceding the First World War, the urban petty bourgeois class became more influential. After the War, the Indian masses – peasantry and the industrial working classes – made their presence felt.

However, Dutt argues, the leadership remained in the hands of the propertied classes who remained most influential in the Congress. These elements prevented any radicalisation of the movement which could become dangerous to their own interests. He is particularly harsh on Gandhi whom he castigates as the 'the mascot of the bourgeoisie'. He asserts that the Non-cooperation Movement was withdrawn because the masses were becoming too militant and a threat to the propertied classes within and outside the Congress. The Civil Disobedience Movement met with a similar fate when it was 'suddenly and mysteriously called off at the moment when it was reaching its height' in 1932. According to Dutt, the Congress had a 'twofold character' which persisted throughout its history. It was because of the very nature of the Indian bourgeoisie. On the one hand, its contradictions with imperialism prompted it to lead the people's movement against colonial government. But, on the other hand, its fear of a militant movement, which could jeopardise its interests and privileges, drew it back into co-operation with imperialism. It, therefore, played a vacillating role throughout the period of the national movement. Dutt's work proved to be a trendsetter in Marxist historiography on Indian national movement. The latter works of the Marxist historians were in some measures influenced by it.

Dutt's book was followed by A.R. Desai's *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (1948). It is another thoroughgoing account of the colonial period and the rise of nationalism from a Marxist perspective. According to Desai, the Indian national movement developed through five phases. Each phase was based on particular social classes which supported and sustained it. In the first phase, the Indian national movement was basically initiated and supported by the intelligentsia who were the product of the modern English system of education. This phase, which began with Rammohan Roy and his followers, continued till 1885 when the Indian National Congress was founded. Now a new phase began which extended until 1905 when the Swadeshi Movement emerged. In this phase, the national movement represented the interests of the new bourgeoisie which had started developing in India, although it was still in its infancy. The modern education had created a middle class, the development of the Indian and international trade had given rise to a merchant class, and the modern industries had created a class of industrialists. Thus, in its new phase, Indian national movement took up 'the demands of the educated classes and the trading bourgeoisie such as the Indianisation of Services, the association of the Indians

with the administrative machinery of the state, the stoppage of economic drain, and others formulated in the resolutions of the Indian National Congress'.

The third phase of the national movement started with the Swadeshi Movement and continued till 1918. During this phase, the national movement covered a relatively broader social base which included 'sections of the lower-middle class'. In the fourth phase, which covered the period from the Rowlatt Satyagraha to the end of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, the social base of the national movement expanded enormously. The movement, which was until now confined mainly to the upper and the middle classes, now began to encompass certain sections of the masses. However, according to Desai, the leadership of the Congress remained in the hands of those who were under the strong influence of the Indian capitalist class. From 1918 onwards, the industrial bourgeoisie 'began to exert a powerful influence in determining the programme, policies, strategies, tactics and forms of struggle of the Indian national movement led by the Congress of which Gandhi was the leader.' Two other significant developments during this period were the rise of the left groups since the late 1920s, which tried to introduce pro-people agenda in the national movement, and the consolidation of communal forces which sought to divide the society.

In the fifth phase (1934-39), there was a growing disenchantment with the Gandhian ideology within the Congress and the rise of the Congress Socialists who represented the petty bourgeois elements. Outside the Congress, movements of the peasants, workers, depressed classes and various linguistic nationalities had developed. The divisive ideology of communalism had also grown in influence. However, according to Desai, all these stirrings were not of much consequence and the mainstream was still solidly occupied by the Gandhian Congress which represented the interests of the dominant classes.

These two books initiated the Marxist thinking on Indian national movement. They presented it as a movement dominated by the bourgeoisie. Their main argument is that although various classes, including the peasantry and the working classes, participated in it, its basic character remained bourgeois. This view of national movement remained quite common among the Marxist historians for quite some time. N.M. Goldberg, an important Soviet historian, distinguished between the 'Moderate' and the 'Extremist' wings of early national movement by arguing that the social base of the former was the weak capitalist class tied to foreign capital, while the social base of the latter was constituted by the petty bourgeoisie. Another Soviet historian, V.I. Pavlov, similarly sought to establish a direct co-relation between various bourgeois strata and the different stages of Indian national movement. According to him, in the initial phase, the comprador big bourgeoisie could not take a strong stand against the colonial government which was reflected in 'moderate' activities. In the later stage, the industrial bourgeoisie with interests in local markets was more supportive of a struggle. Even more importantly, the Maratha petty bourgeoisie stirred up struggle against colonial government. Tilak heralded a militant phase in the movement [Rajat Ray, 1983: 11-12].

However, over the years, several Marxist historians began to differ from such restrictive paradigm for analysing and understanding the Indian nationalism. Bipan Chandra began to criticise this view and his criticism became more comprehensive over the years. In his very first book, *The Rise and Growth of Economic*

Nationalism in India (1966), he emphasised on the important role of ideas and argued that ideas are not created directly from particular modes of production, even though the latter shape them. Thus, certain autonomy must be given to the ideas as significant vehicle of action and change. It is true, he says, that 'social relations exist independently of the ideas men form of them', but 'men's understanding of these relations is crucial to their social and political action'. Moreover, he argues that the intellectuals in any society stand above the narrow interests of the class in which they are born. It is 'sheer crude mechanical materialism' to define the intellectuals only on the basis of their origins in particular classes or groups. It is because the intellectuals are guided 'at the level of consciousness, by thought and not by interests'. Therefore, the Indian nationalist leaders, as intellectuals, were acting above the interests of the narrow class or group they were born in. This does not mean, however, that they did not represent any class. But this was done at an ideological level and not for personal gain. As Bipan Chandra puts it:

'Like the best and genuine intellectuals the world over and in all history, the Indian thinkers and intellectuals of the 19th century too were philosophers and not hacks of a party or a class. It is true that they were not above class or group and did in practice represent concrete class or group interests. But when they reflected the interests of a class or a group, they did so through the prism of ideology and not directly as members, or the obedient servants, of that class or group.'

On the basis of his analysis of the economic thinking of the early nationalist leaders, both the so-called moderates and the extremists, Bipan Chandra concludes that their overall economic outlook was 'basically capitalist'. By this he means that 'In nearly every aspect of economic life they championed capitalist growth in general and the interests of the industrial capitalists in particular'. This does not mean that they were working for the individual interests of the capitalists. In fact, the capitalist support for the Congress in the early phase was negligible. Nationalist support for industrial capitalism derived from the belief of the nationalists that 'industrial development along capitalist lines was the only way to regenerate the country in the economic field, or that, in other words, the interests of the industrial capitalist class objectively coincided with the chief national interest of the moment'. Thus, by abandoning the instrumentalist approach espoused by Dutt and Desai, Bipan Chandra began a major change in perspective in the Marxist historiography of the Indian national movement.

However, despite this change in perspective, Bipan Chandra remained anchored to several points of the paradigm developed by R.P. Dutt. In an essay, 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity', there were many points where his arguments resembled those of Dutt and Desai. Firstly, he interprets the 'peaceful and bloodless' approach of struggle adopted by the nationalist leadership as 'a basic guarantee to the propertied classes that they would at no time be faced with a situation in which their interests might be put in jeopardy even temporarily'. This understanding of non-violence was the same as that of Dutt and Desai. Secondly, he argues that the relationship between the Indian masses and the nationalists always remained problematic. For the moderate leaders, the masses had no role to play. Even the extremists, despite their rhetoric, failed to mobilise the masses. Although the masses came into nationalist fold during the Gandhian period, they were not politicised and the lower classes of

agricultural workers and poor peasants in most parts of country were never politically mobilised, 'so that the social base of the national movement was still not very strong in 1947'. And even when they were mobilised, the masses remained outside the decision-making process and the gulf between them and the leaders was 'unbridged'. According to him, 'the political activity of the masses was rigidly controlled from the top. The masses never became an independent political force. The question of their participation in the decision-making process was never even raised.' Thirdly, the nationalist leaders in all phases of the movement stressed that the process of achievement of national freedom would be evolutionary, and not revolutionary. The basic strategy to attain this goal would be pressure-compromise-pressure. In this strategy, pressure would be brought upon the colonial rulers through agitations, political work and mobilisation of the people. When the authorities were willing to offer concessions, the pressure would be withdrawn and a compromise would be reached. The political concessions given by the colonial rulers would be accepted and worked. After this, the Congress should prepare for another agitation to gain new concessions. It is in this phased, non-violent manner that several political concessions would be taken from the British and this process would ultimately lead to the liberation of the country.

On the basis of his analysis of the social base, the ideology, and the strategy of political struggle, Bipan Chandra concluded that the nationalist movement as represented by the Congress was 'a bourgeois democratic movement, that is, it represented the interests of all classes and segments of Indian society vis-à-vis imperialism but under the hegemony of the industrial bourgeoisie'. This character remained constant throughout its entire history from inception to 1947. Even during the Gandhian phase, there was no change. In fact, according to Bipan Chandra, 'the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the national movement was, if anything, even more firmly clamped down in the Gandhian era than before'.

However, in a later book, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947* (1988), Bipan Chandra has decisively moved away from the views of Dutt and Desai on Indian national movement. Most of the propositions regarding the Indian National Congress developed in the earlier quoted article are now abandoned. The Congress strategy is no longer seen in terms of pressure-compromise-pressure. It is now viewed in terms of Gramscian 'war of position' whereby a prolonged struggle is waged for the attainment of goal. As Bipan Chandra puts it:

'The Indian national movement … is the only movement where the broadly Gramscian theoretical perspective of a war of position was successfully practised; where state power was not seized in a single historical moment of revolution, but through prolonged popular struggle on a moral, political and ideological level; where reserves of counter-hegemony were built up over the years through progressive stages; where the phases of struggle alternated with "passive" phases.'

This struggle was not violent because the nationalist leaders were concerned with fighting against imperialism as well as welding India into a nation. In the course of a protracted struggle fought at both intellectual and political levels, the nationalist leaders wished to show that the colonial rule was not beneficial to the Indian people nor was it invincible. The Gandhian non-violence also is now re-interpreted. Thus, it was not considered as 'a mere dogma of Gandhiji nor was it dictated by the interests of the propertied classes. It was an essential part of a

movement whose strategy involved the waging of a hegemonic struggle based on a mass movement which mobilized the people to the widest possible extent.' The national movement was now conceived as an all-class movement which provided space and opportunity for any class to build its hegemony. Moreover, the main party, the Congress, is now regarded not as a party but a movement. In this way, Bipan Chandra now makes a clear break from the conventional Marxist interpretation of the Indian national movement.

Sumit Sarkar presents another famous Marxist interpretation of the national movement which is at variance with and critical of Dutt-Desai view. In his first book, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908* (1973), he terms it as a 'simplistic version of the Marxian class-approach'. He criticises its contention that the moderate phase was dominated by the 'big bourgeoisie' while the extremist phase by the 'urban petty bourgeoisie'. Instead, he argues that 'a clear class-differential between moderate and extremist would still be very difficult to establish, and was obviously nonexistent at the leadership level'. He thinks that this version of Marxist interpretation suffers from the 'defect of assuming too direct or crude an economic motivation for political action and ideals'. According to him, the actions of the nationalist leaders could be better understood by using Trotsky's concept of 'substitutism' whereby the intelligentsia acts 'repeatedly as a kind of proxy for as-yet passive social forces with which it had little organic connection'. He also uses Gramscian categories of 'traditional' and 'organic' intellectuals. According to Antonio Gramsci, the famous Italian Marxist activist and thinker, the 'organic' intellectuals participate directly in the production-process and have direct links with the people whom they lead. The 'traditional' intellectuals, on the other hand, are not directly connected with either the production-process or the people. However, they become leaders of particular classes by ideologically assuming the responsibility of those classes. Sarkar thinks that the leaders of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal who came mostly from 'the traditional learned castes' and were not associated with commerce and industry particularly after the 1850s, and can be thought as 'traditional intelligentsia' in Gramscian sense. They were not the Gramscian organic intellectuals who generally emerge from the same classes which they lead. This view is quite close to that of Bipan Chandra so far as there is an emphasis on the role of ideology in the formation of the early nationalist leadership. Sumit Sarkar considers that even though the early nationalist leaders were not directly associated with the bourgeoisie, they objectively played a role in paving 'the way for the independent capitalist development of our country'. In another article, 'The Logic of Gandhian Nationalism' (1985), he goes further to argue that the objective stance of the Swadeshi Movement in favour of the bourgeoisie later gets transformed into direct intervention by the bourgeoisie and the subjective position taken in the interests of the capitalists by the leaders of the Civil Disobedience Movement. By studying the social forces involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement and the developments leading to the Gandhi-Irwin pact, he concludes that there was 'the vastly enhanced role of distinctively bourgeois groups, both in contributing heavily to the initial striking power of Civil Disobedience and ultimately in its calling off'. He qualifies his statement by saying that Gandhi was 'no mere bourgeois tool in any simplistic or mechanical sense' and that he can hardly be considered as 'a puppet' in the hands of the capitalists. He, however, insists that the Gandhian leadership had 'a certain coincidence of aims with Indian business interests at specific points' and 'an occasional significant coincidence of subjective attitudes and inhibitions with bourgeois interests'.

The Marxist perspective on Indian nationalism is, therefore, is informed by a class approach related to politics and ideology. The basic position is that the nationalist leadership and the nationalist ideology objectively and / or subjectively represented the Indian bourgeoisie and wanted that India should evolve on the path of independent capitalist development.

3.5 SUMMARY

The colonialist view on Indian nation and nationalism disregarded the possibility of India ever becoming a nation. It, moreover, considered the national movement as a movement of narrow self-interest led by a microscopic English-educated minority. According to this view, this small middle-class section of the population would never be able to form a nation out of the disparate assemblage of innumerable castes, linguistic and regional groups.

The nationalist historians strongly reacted against this negative characterisation of Indian people. They completely rejected the colonialist idea that India could never be formed into a nation. In fact, as many of them argued, India always possessed the potential to be forged into a nation, and it did happen at several points in the past. Although they did not deny the role of modern Western ideas, many of these historians argued that India had an underlying cultural unity since the most ancient times. The nationalist historians also regarded the national movement as a pan-Indian movement encompassing all classes and groups led by idealist and selfless leaders.

The Marxist historians argued against both of them. Their analysis of the national movement was based on an understanding of the role of economic factors and classes in the making of the nation as well as a movement. According to them, although the national movement was an expression of the basic antagonism between the Indian people and imperialist government, it was a movement either directly influenced by bourgeoisie or indirectly working in the direction of capitalist development. Thus, even though various classes and groups were involved in the movement, it ultimately served the fundamental interests of the Indian bourgeois classes.

3.6 EXERCISES

1)   Discuss the main differences between the colonialist and nationalist views on Indian nation and national movement.

2)   What are the basic points of the Marxist historiography on Indian nationalism?

3)   In what ways the views of Bipan Chandra and Sumit Sarkar are different from those of R.P. Dutt and A.R. Desai?

UNIT 4 PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN NATIONALISM–II*

Structure

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last Unit we discussed some major views on Indian nationalism – the colonialist, nationalist, and Marxist. In this Unit we will discuss some other views which are also of crucial significance so far as the interpretation of the national movement is concerned. A consideration of all these perspectives is aimed towards illustrating the point that not only was nationalism a complex phenomenon but also that history-writing is an intricate exercise informed by varying ideological and political practices.

4.2 THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL ON INDIAN NATIONALISM

As the term indicates, the 'Cambridge School' was the name given to a group of historians mostly working in the Cambridge University. Their works during the 1960s and 1970s advanced a certain point of view which resembled in many ways some of the ideas of the colonialist historiography and which was in opposition to the nationalist and Marxist approaches. The 'Cambridge view' was offered as an alternative explanation of the Indian nationalism. It sought to completely debunk the Indian national movement against the colonial rule led by leaders who had put their faith in the nationalist ideology. While both the nationalist and Marxist historians argued that Indian nationalism evolved as a result of the contradiction between Indian people and imperialism, the historians associated with the Cambridge School asserted that there was no real contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people and the central contradiction lay among the Indians themselves.

The Cambridge School had its precursor in the writings of John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson who, in their various works such as 'Imperialism of Free Trade' (1953), *Africa and the Victorians* (1961) and 'Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism' (1972), argued that colonialism was the result of internal political weakness of the Asian and African regimes which then collaborated with the Europeans for setting up the colonial rules. They, thus, emphasized on the continuity from pre-colonial to colonial periods and stressed the collaborative role of the natives. Gallagher's student Anil Seal, in his early work on India titled *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (1968), argued that it was the English

education which created a new middle class which clamoured for political representation. The British obliged them by offering posts in various institutions, such as universities, and seats in municipal councils and later in provincial assemblies. However, the claimants were many while the posts were few. This led to intense rivalry among the elite, particularly at regional levels because that is where the new avenues were open. Seal asserted that there was no conflict between the British and the Indians or between imperialist rule and the Indian people. Instead, the main contradiction was among the Indians, particularly among the educated elite, on the basis of caste, community and religion. He argued that

'Much attention has been paid to the apparent conflicts between imperialism and nationalism; it would be at least equally profitable to study their real partnerships. Both British rule and Indian enterprise had a hand in bringing these [nationalist] mobilisations about' [Anil Seal 1968: 342].

In opposition to the Marxist historians, Seal argued that Indian nationalism was not the product of 'any class demand or as the consequence of any sharp changes in the structure of the economy'. He asserted that the emergence and growth of Indian nationalism can be comprehended by 'a conceptual system based on elites, rather than on classes'. During the colonial era, there was intense competition among the elites for posts and positions offered by colonial regime. But such rivalries took place 'between caste and caste, community and community, not between class and class'. Most of these mobilisations were horizontal, based on prescriptive identities such as caste and religion. In this sense, the Indian nationalism 'did not square with…the genuine nationalisms of nineteenth-century Europe' [ibid: 341]. Moreover, the so-called struggles which the Indian National Congress waged against the colonial rule were fake:

'Many of the battles which the Raj and the Congress waged were mere feints between two sides each held back by the unreliable troops in its own front line. Non-co-operation, Civil Disobedience, the new constitution, the clashes of 1942 were all parts of this strange struggle between impotent rivals, a Dasehra duel between two hollow statues, locked in motionless and simulated combat. Towards the end, when they had come to control their own allies, the Muslim League broke up this mimic warfare, and at once a real ferocity appeared—between Indian and Indian' [ibid: 351].

The leaders who led the Indian nationalist movement were all disgruntled people whose self-interest had not been met. Thus, according to Seal, Dadabhai Naoroji was raising the issues about drain of wealth and Indian impoverishment solely from the motive to keep himself in comfort in London.

Later, the historians of this trend shifted from the idea of horizontal mobilisation around caste and community to vertical mobilisation around factions. These factions are vertically organised structures of patron-client relationship operational in the localities and controlled by local magnates. The local struggles 'were seldom marked by the alliance of landlord with landlord, peasant with peasant, educated with educated, Muslim with Muslim and Brahmin with Brahmin. More frequently, Hindus worked with Muslims, Brahmins were hand in glove with non-Brahmins; and notables organized their dependents as supporters, commissioned professional men as spokesmen and turned government servants into aides' [Anil Seal 1973: 323].

These factions extended their reach to the towns and cities by employing the lawyers and politicians to serve their causes. Instead of the regions and the country, the localities were projected as the main centres of power. These vertically organised factions cut across the boundaries of caste, class, religion and region, and they were the most important factors in Indian politics, including the nationalist politics. Although the Cambridge School still considered that the desire for collaboration with the colonial regime was the predominant motive behind politics among Indians, it was no longer about education or conflict among the elites. It was now the competition for getting seats in various representative institutions such as municipalities and provincial assemblies which were thrown open by the British to the Indians. And this battle was now fought at the level of localities. It was, thus, the locality which controlled the Indian politics, the region (provinces) and the nation were secondary to it. The British had to concede to 'the existence of a legal underworld where the private justice of faction settled conflicts with the blows of lathis, or where, at the best, the strong could get their own way in the courts. In the mythology of empire, the age of Elphinstone, Munro and Thomason seems one of heroic social engineering; but under the pinnacles of their Raj lay a ground-floor reality where Indians battled with Indians, sometimes for the favours of the district officer, sometimes to do each other down without reference to him and his book of rules. At these levels, it might be the British who governed, but it was Indians who ruled' [ibid: 328-29].

According to the Cambridge historians, the British colonial government was the first and the most important motor of change in Indian subcontinent. The emergence and growth of Indian nationalist movement took place within the constitutional, administrative and political matrix created by it. Right from the beginning the Indians were needed to man the lower rungs of administration, but very few Indians were in the decision-making process. Beginning in the later nineteenth century, however, certain constitutional measures at the local, regional and provincial levels gave opportunity to the Indians to participate in policy-making. The two World Wars and the Great Depression compelled the government to economize at the administrative and legislative levels, leading to the devolution of power. The 1919 and 1935 constitutional and political reforms allowed Indians to hold some amount of real power at the provincial level on the basis of a much expanded electorate. To properly take advantage of the opportunities offered by the British withdrawal from the administrative and legislative posts, the competing Indians developed broader networks than was hitherto done. Nationalist and anti-imperialist rhetoric was adopted for what were basically related to local issues. The local issues and factions were crucial to understand the wider linkages cutting across the localities and provinces. The regional and national leaders worked in the interests of the local bosses. Even the national organisations, such as the Congress and the Muslim League, contained factions within it whose levers were in the hands of local magnates. In this world of politics, the leaders were not driven by ideology but by pursuit of power. All individuals, all leaders and their followers, in all places were driven by personal self-interest consisting of search for power and resources. All talks of ideology and transforming society were mere facade behind which naked game of power was played out. [See, S.B. Upadhyay 2015].

The basic thesis of the Cambridge School was reflected in a series of articles published in the journal *Modern Asian Studies* and collected in the volume, *Locality, Province and Nation* (1973). Besides, there were several books published by these writers which put forward the basic arguments of the School: Gordon

Johnson's *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1890 to 1905* (1973); C.A. Bayly's *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880 –1920* (1975); D.A. Washbrook's *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: Madras Presidency 1870 –1920* (1976); C.J. Baker's *The Politics of South India 1920 –1937*(1976); B..R. Tomlinson's *The Indian National Congress and the Raj 1929 –* 1942 (1976); and C. J. Baker, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal (eds.), *Power, Profit and Politics* (1981).

4.3   THE *SUBALTERN STUDIES*

During the closing decades of the last century, the scholars associated with the journal *Subaltern Studies* shot into fame by vehemently criticising all other forms of Indian history-writing. They put forward their own interpretation of the modern Indian history as a whole, particularly of Indian nationalism. Beginning in the early 1980s, with the publication of the first volume of *Subaltern Studies* (in 1982), this trend of interpretation of Indian nationalism became quite influential among certain sections of Indian historians. It was declared to be a radical departure in modern Indian historiography which claimed to dissociate from all earlier views on Indian national movement. In what can be called the manifesto of the project, Ranajit Guha, in the very first volume of the *Subaltern Studies*, declared that 'The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism.' According to Guha, all types of elitist histories have one thing in common and that is the absence of the politics of the people from their accounts. He criticised the three main trends in Indian historiography – i) colonialist, which saw the colonial rule as the fulfillment of a mission to enlighten the ignorant people; ii) nationalist, which visualised all the protest activities as parts of the making of the nation-state; and iii) Marxist, which subsumed the people's struggles under the progression towards revolution and a socialist state. According to him, there are no attempts in these works to understand and write about the way in which the subaltern groups view the world and practice their politics. Earlier historians were criticised for ignoring the popular initiative and accepting the official negative characterisation of the rebel and the rebellion.

In his essay 'The Prose of Counter-Insurgency', Ranajit Guha launched a scathing attack on the existing peasant and tribal histories in India for considering the peasant rebellions as 'purely spontaneous and unpremeditated affairs' and for ignoring the consciousness of the rebels themselves. He accused all the accounts of rebellions, starting with the immediate official reports to the histories written by the left radicals, of writing the texts of counter-insurgency which refused to recognise the agency of the people and 'to acknowledge the insurgent as the subject of his own history'. According to Guha, they all failed to acknowledge that there existed a parallel subaltern domain of politics which was not influenced by the elite politics and which possessed an independent, self-generating dynamics. Its roots lay in pre-colonial popular social and political structures. However, this domain was not archaic: 'As modern as indigenous elite politics, it was distinguished by its relatively greater depth in time as well as in structure'. In his view, there was now an urgent requirement for setting the record straight by viewing the history from the point-of-view of the subaltern classes. The politics of the people was crucial because it constituted an autonomous domain which 'neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter'. The people's politics differed from the elite politics in several crucial aspects.

For one, its roots lay in the traditional organisations of the people such as caste and kinship networks, tribal solidarity, territoriality, etc. Secondly, while elite mobilisations were vertical in nature, people's mobilisations were horizontal. Thirdly, whereas the elite mobilisation was legalistic and pacific, the subaltern mobilisation was relatively violent. Fourthly, the elite mobilisation was more cautious and controlled while the subaltern mobilisation was more spontaneous.

The Subaltern historians, disenchanted with the Congress nationalism and its embodiment in the Indian state, rejected the thesis that popular mobilisation was the result of either economic conditions or initiatives from the top. They claimed to have discovered a popular autonomous domain which was opposed to the elite domain of politics. This domain of the subaltern was defined by perpetual resistance and rebellion against the elite. The subaltern historians also attributed a general unity to this domain clubbing together a variety of heterogeneous groups such as tribes, peasantry, proletariat and, occasionally, the middle classes as well. Moreover, this domain was said to be almost completely uninfluenced by the elite politics and was claimed to posses an independent, self-generating dynamics. The charismatic leadership was no longer viewed as the chief force behind a movement. It was instead the people's interpretation of such charisma which acquired prominence in analysis of a movement.

This idea is present in most of the early contributions to the series. Gyanendra Pandey, in 'Peasant Revolt and Indian Nationalism' (*SS I*), argues that peasant movement in Awadh arose before and independently of the Non-cooperation movement. According to him, peasants' understanding of the local power structure and its alliance with colonial power was more advanced than that of the Congress leaders. In fact, the peasant militancy was reduced wherever the Congress organisation was stronger. In Stephen Henningham's account of the 'Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces' (*SS II*), the elite and the subaltern domains were clearly distinguished from each other. He talks of two movements existing together but parallel to each other – 'an elite uprising', started by '*the high caste rich peasants and small landlords who dominated the Congress*', and a 'subaltern rebellion' powered by '*the poor, low caste people of the region*'.

Shahid Amin, in his article 'Gandhi as Mahatma' (in *SS III*), studies the popular perception of Mahatma Gandhi. He shows that the popular perception and actions were completely at variance with the Congress leaders' perception of Gandhi. Although the Mahatma's messages were spread widely through 'rumours', there was an entire philosophy of economy and politics behind it – the need to become a good human being, to give up drinking, gambling and violence, to take up spinning and to maintain communal harmony. The stories which circulated also emphasised the magical powers of Mahatma and his capacity to reward or punish those who obeyed or disobeyed him. On the other hand, the Mahatma's name and his supposed magical powers were also used to reinforce as well as establish caste hierarchies, to make the debtors pay and to boost the cow-protection movement. All these popular interpretations of the Mahatma's messages reached their climax during the Chauri Chaura incidents in 1922 when his name was invoked to burn the police post, to kill the policemen and to loot the market. David Hardiman, in his numerous articles, focused on subaltern themes and argued that whether it was the tribal assertion in South Gujarat, or the Bhil movement in Eastern Gujarat, or the radicalism of the agricultural workers during the Civil Disobedience Movement, there was an independent politics of the subaltern classes against the elites.

Similarly, Sumit Sarkar, in 'The Conditions and Nature of Subaltern Militancy' (*SS III*), argues that the Non-cooperation movement in Bengal 'revealed a picture of masses outstripping leaders…and the popular initiative eventually alarmed leaders into calling for a halt'. Thus, 'the subaltern groups…formed a relatively autonomous political domain with specific features and collective mentalities which need to be explored, and that this was a world distinct from the domain of the elite politicians who in early twentieth century Bengal came overwhelmingly from high-caste educated professional groups connected with zamindari or intermediate tenure-holding'.

Thus we see that in these and in many other essays in the earlier volumes, an attempt was made to separate the elite and the subaltern domains and to establish the autonomy of subaltern consciousness and action. This phase was generally characterised by emphasis on subaltern themes and autonomous subaltern consciousness. The subalternist historians forcefully asserted that both the colonial ideology and the bourgeois nationalist ideology failed to establish their hegemony over the subaltern domain. Moreover, the Indian bourgeoisie failed in its prime work of speaking for the nation, and the Congress nationalism was bourgeois and elite which restrained popular radicalism.

A few years after its inauguration as advocates of people's voice in history and proponents of an autonomous subaltern political domain, the project of *Subaltern Studies* underwent significant changes. Under postmodernist and postcolonialist influences, many of its contributors began to question its earlier emphasis on autonomous subaltern consciousness. Gayatri Spivak, in particular, criticised the humanist viewpoint adopted by the earlier trend within *Subaltern Studies*. At another level, the idea of subalternity became much wider to include even the colonial elite as they were considered subaltern vis-à-vis the imperialist rulers, the phenomenon being termed by Partha Chatterjee as 'subalternity of the elite'. Chatterjee's influential book, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1986), derived from the postcolonial framework of Edward Said which considered the colonial power-knowledge as overwhelming and irresistible. His later book, *The Nation and its Fragments* (1995), carries this analysis even further.

Subalternity as a concept was also redefined. Earlier, it stood for the oppressed classes in opposition to the dominant classes both inside and outside. Later, it was conceptualised in opposition to colonialism, modernity and Enlightenment. The earlier emphasis on the 'subaltern' now gave way to a focus on 'community'. Earlier the elite nationalism was stated to hijack the people's initiatives for its own project; now the entire project of nationalism was declared to be only a version of colonial discourse with its emphasis on centralisation of movement, and later of the state. The ideas of secularism and enlightenment rationalism were attacked and there began an emphasis on the 'fragments' and 'episodes'. Thus, the subaltern historiography on Indian nationalism went through two phases. [For further details on Subaltern School, see S.B. Upadhyay 2015].

4.4   SOME OTHER VIEWS

Although the interpretations of Indian nationalism as hitherto described hold sway, they do not cover all the approaches. According to Sugata Bose, the need is to move beyond the debates between 'secular statist and Subaltern fragmentalist histories'. It is because while 'the secular, statist historiography relegates religiously informed nationalism, especially of the Muslim variety, to the status of 'communalism', the subaltern, fragmentalist kind unduly privileges the

fragment constituted by the Bengali Hindu middle classes, almost equating it in the process with the whole of the Indian nation' [S. Bose 2001: 284, 291-2]. Here we will briefly discuss two books which offer a different interpretation of Indian nationalism from what we have discussed so far.

C.A. Bayly, in his *Origins of Nationality in South Asia* (1998), has argued that Indian nationalism was not an entirely modern product. It was built on the pre-existing indigenous ideas of territoriality, ethical government and public morality. Bayly traces the roots of regional patriotisms which existed before the onset of colonialism and which contributed significantly in the making of the modern Indian nationalism. He is critical of those scholars who consider Indian nationalism as basically a western product created in the late nineteenth century by the English-educated intelligentsia. According to him, patriotic sentiments in the subcontinent pre-dated the western influences, and 'an analogy to European patriotisms…before the French Revolution…could be found in the sentiment of attachment to land and political institutions which developed rapidly in some regional Indian homelands between 1400 and 1800'. Such ideas developed around the 'themes of perfect city, corporate kingship, humoural balance and good counsel'. Deriving from multiple sources (such as Hindu normative ideas, Greek and Islamic sources, and rational ideas of the Mughal elite), these ideas basically focused on particular regions and territories [C.A. Bayly 1998: 36].

Although Bayly does not entirely disagree with the view that 'much of modern Indian nationalist organisation and ideology was consciously or unconsciously derived from western exemplars, especially as it was reflected in the central organisations of the national struggle.' However, he emphasises that 'the particularities of Indian nationalism have to be understood in the context of Indian forms of social organisation and ideologies of good governance that pre-date the full western impact' [ibid. v]. According to him, the claim that Indian nationalism was completely a product of colonial times is a 'drastic foreshortening of history which is implied in many recent critiques of nationalist modernity'. He argues that a strong sense of patriotism, which bound many Indians to their homelands, had been present since the seventeenth century. They had taken collective action to protect their homelands from outside intrusion. Towards the period leading to the decline of the Mughal empire, strong nationalist sentiments developed in many regions. Several regions provide the earliest expressions of such feelings. In Maharashtra, there was 'a relatively strong and generalised Indian patriotism in which an emerging sense of commitment to regional culture coincided with the creation of a regional language and the formation of a relatively strong state' [ibid. 26]. This was 'a patriotism underpinned by language, devotional religion and economic integration' which 'was energized by an expanding state which promoted themes of war and remembrance' [ibid. 36]. In Rajasthan and Central India, the Rajput sense of solidarity and resistance to the Mughals gave rise to 'a sense of Rajput patriotism'. In Jat region, there was distinct sense of regional patriotism as the population in this area fought against the Mughals to protect their territorial space. In Telugu region in southern Deccan, a strong sense of 'Telugu ethnicity' had emerged as early as between 1400 and 1600. Further south, a sense of Mysorean patriotic identity was forged by Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. Even in other regions, such as Bengal and Tamil Nadu, forms of patriotism could be found which defined the community. These forms of patriotism were different from various other pre-colonial bonds such as those formed around religion, sect, and caste. These patriotic sentiments helped the later reformist and nationalist ideologies and associations which emerged in the nineteenth century.

Rajat Ray, like Bayly, is critical of those theorists who consider that Indian nationalism was entirely a modern product, constructed from the discourses derived from Europe. He discusses the multiple social, religious and political bonds which gave rise to a common culture and mentality and thus created a 'felt community', a sense of Indianness, much before the advent of modern nationalism. This 'felt community' encompassed both the Hindus and the Muslims and transcended the barriers of regions. He argues that, although the idea of a larger community in pre-modern times was different from the modern idea of nation-state, there was a cultural community which cut across the regional, religious and caste boundaries. Ray insists that broader community, even 'national', bonds existed before the colonial period. The resistance by the remnants of the Mughal state to the increasingly assertive East India Company showed a broader attachment towards previous social and political order. Even more importantly, the various rebellions since the onset of the colonial rule culminating in the Revolt of 1857 showed a common bond among people and their allegiance to a territorial state. He argues:

'At the instinctual level of the collective mentality, it was the violent protest of a black subject people against their white oppressors. . . It was not, however, the rebels who put the struggle in terms of a war between the races. .... At the level of conscious thought, they clothed the underlying race war in the ideological garb of a struggle between the true religions and the false one. The joint brotherhood of the religions expressed, in so far as they were capable of expressing it, the instinctive feeling that the native subject race constituted one people as against the white Christian rulers.'

The search for the roots of Indian national identity in the pre-colonial state forms, societies, and composite cultures in different parts of the subcontinent present a new perspective which is different from the mainstream understanding of Indian nationalism.

4.5 SUMMARY

Like nationalism in other countries, the Indian nationalism has also been subject to varying interpretations. In this Unit, two important trends of interpretation – the Cambridge School and the Subaltern School – have been discussed. While the Cambridge School historians try to debunk the phenomenon of Indian nationalism and question the idea of selfless leaders, the Subaltern historians question the official narrative of Indian nationalism. But the Subaltern historians underline the existence of a strong popular nationalism which was autonomous and more militant than the organised and official nationalism. Besides these interpretations, we have also briefly discussed another trend which points towards the presence of strong patriotic and even national sentiments in pre-colonial India.

4.6 EXERCISES

1) Discuss the interpretation of Indian nationalism given by the Cambridge School.

2) How do the Subaltern historians view the phenomenon of Indian nationalism?

3) Briefly discuss the view of C.A. Bayly and Rajat Ray on Indian nationalism.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Adeeb Khalid, 'Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,' *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No 2, summer 2006.

Alev Cinar, 'National History as a Contested Site: The Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations of the Nation,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, April 2001.

Ali A. Mazrui (ed), *Africa since 1935, UNESCO General History of Africa*, California University Press 1993.

Ali Mazrui, 'Africa between Nationalism and Nationhood: A Political Survey,' *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol 13, No 1, September 1982.

Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

Anil Seal, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in India', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1973.

Anthony Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1986.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Nationalist Movement in India: A Reader*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983.

Bipan Chandra, "The Making of the Indian Nation: The Theoretical Perspective" in *Indica* (Journal of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Mumbai), March 2004.

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

C.A. Bayly, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945*, Stanford 1962.

Chandra, Bipan, 'Nationalist Historians' Interpretations of the Indian National Movement', in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar (eds.), *Situating Indian History*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Elie Kedouri, *Nationalism*, London, 1960.

Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990

Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, London, 1983.

Ewout Frankema, 'The colonial roots of land inequality: geography, factor endowments or institutions?' in *Economic History Review*, 63, 2, 2010.

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, 1986

George Reid, 'Missionaries and West African Nationalism,' *Phylon*, No 39, No 3, 1978.

Gopal Balakrishnan (ed.), *Mapping the Nation*, London, 1996.

James McCann, 'Maize and Grace: History, Corn and Africa's New Landscapes, 1500-1999,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol 43, No 2 April 2001.

Jean Comaroff & John Comaroff, 'Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa,' *American Ethnologist*, Vol 13, No 1, 1986.

John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith (ed.), *Nationalism*, Oxford, 1994.

Juan R. Cole & Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Nationalism and the Colonial Legacy in the Middle East and Central Asia: Introduction,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, May 2002.

Kam Louie (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Chinese Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Lord Hailey, 'Nationalism in Africa,' *Journal of the Royal African Society*, April 1937.

M. Leifer (ed), *Asian Nationalism*, Routledge, London 2000.

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

P. Duignan & L.H. Gann (eds), *Colonialism in Africa: 1870-1960*, Vols III & IV, Cambridge University Press, 1973 & 1975.

Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Delhi: OUP, 1993.

Rashid Khalidi, 'Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature,' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No 5, December, 1991.

Rajat Ray, 'Three Interpretations of Indian Nationalism', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Essays in Modern Indian History*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983.

Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, *Historiography in the Modern World: Western and Indian Perspectives*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015 (forthcoming).

Stein Tonnesson and Hans Antlov (eds.), *Asian Forms of the Nation*, Curzon press, 1996.

Stephen Howe (ed.) *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, Routledge India, 2010.

Stewart Lone (ed), *Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Asia: From the Taiping Rebellion to the Vietnam War*, Greenwood Press, Connecticut & London, 2007.

Sugata Bose, 'Between Monolith and Fragment: A Note of the Historiography of Nationalism in Bengal', in Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (ed.), Bengal: Rethinking History: Essays in Historiography, New Delhi: Manohar, 2001.

Sumit Sarkar, 'Popular' Movements and 'Middle Class' Leadership: Perspectives and Problems of a 'History from Below,' Calcutta 1983.

Sumit Sarkar, The *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal, 1903-1908*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1973.

Tan Tai Yong, *Creating 'Greater Malaysia'- Decolonization and the Politics of Merger*, Singapore 2008.

Umut Ozkirimlu, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, London, 2000.