

PSIR Section B

Unit I_Indian Government and Politics

Syllabus

1. Indian Nationalism:

- a. **Political Strategies of India's Freedom struggle: constitutionalism to mass Satyagraha, Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience; militant and revolutionary movements, Peasant and workers' movements.**
- b. **Perspectives on Indian National Movement: Liberal, Socialist and Marxist; Radical humanist and Dalit.**

Part-A: Political Strategies of India's Freedom struggle

India's freedom struggle was one of the largest mass movements in Indian history. It had multiple manifestations in terms of strategies to get India's freedom as well as in terms of the idea of nation and nationalism. Indian National Congress was initiated by A. O. Hume, a retired British administrator, to organize English educated young leaders with British authority. The INC has taken different strategies during India's freedom struggle under a different set of leadership. Strategies changed from constitutionalism (under the moderate leaders) to mass Satyagraha under M K Gandhi.

M K Gandhi provided leadership and direction to several satyagraha especially in Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience and Quit India movement. Meanwhile, several groups were taking their individual or group level militant and revolutionary movements to get India's freedom. In addition, peasants, workers and depressed classes launched several movements for social, economic and political independence in India.

- a. Constitutionalism
- b. Mass Satyagraha- Non-Co-operative Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement and Quit India Movement
- c. Militant and Revolutionary strategy
- d. Tribals, Peasants and Workers
- e. Depressed classes's strategy

The Indian national movement was one of the largest mass movements in the world.

1a. Constitutionalism

The first two decades of Indian National Congress (1885-1905) is referred to as moderate politics. Indian National Congress (hereafter INC) at that time was hardly a full-fledged political party and its members were successful professional but yet part-time politicians. In the first

twenty years of the Congress struggle, there was overall uniformity in the method and objective of agitation.

The moderate leaders like W.C. Banerjee, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Dadabhai Naoroji, Feroze Shah Mehta, Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Badruddin Tyabji, Justice Ranade and G.Subramanya Aiyar and others were secular in their attitude and modern in orientation. They were much influenced by western liberal ideas like citizenship, rule of law, liberty, equality and fraternity, justice and democracy. Edmund Burke, Bentham and J.S. Mill and their ideas like utilitarianism influenced the moderate leaders. Surendra Nath Banerjee was known as **Indian Burke**. These moderate leaders were not against British rule per se but against the “un-British rule” in India perpetrated by the viceroy, his executive council and bureaucracy.

In the early period, INC was an elite organization as leaders were drawn majorly from urban centers and INC sessions were held in big cities. They met at annual conferences and used to deliberate and adopt various resolutions during a three days conference which the British used to call as “three days tamasha”.

The Moderates had total faith in the British sense of equity, justice and fair play. They were loyal to the British. They looked to England for inspiration and guidance. The Moderates used petitions, resolutions, meetings, leaflets and pamphlets, memorandum and delegations to present their demands. Moderate politicians of the INC had opted for a method of “complaining, petitioning and praying” to the British government. Their method was constitutional and peaceful. They placed faith in the British Parliament. The aim of the INC was to introduce reforms, limited self-government and broadening the participation for the Indian in the Central as well as Provincial legislature. They also demanded that the budget should be referred to the legislature. They confined their political activities to the educated classes only. Their aim was to attain political rights and self-government stage by stage.

Main Demands of Moderates:

1. expansion and reform of legislative councils.
2. Greater opportunities for Indians in higher posts by holding the ICS examination simultaneously in England and in India.
3. Separation of the judiciary from the executive. More powers for the local bodies.
4. Reduction of land revenue and protection of peasants from unjust landlords.
5. Abolition of salt tax and sugar duty.
6. Reduction of spending on the army.
7. Freedom of speech and expression and freedom to form associations.

There were two major contributions of the moderate leaders, namely, the economic critique of nationalism and the creation of nationalist ideology and consciousness:

1. **The economic critique of colonialism:** Dadabhai Naoroji and R.C. Dutta criticized British economic policy in India. They said that free- trade policy of the British

government is a major cause of the de-industrialisation of India. India remained a supplier of raw materials and foodstuffs to the British. Dadabhai Naoroji in his famous book '**Poverty and Un-British Rule in India**' (1901) proposed "**Drain Theory**". He showed how India's wealth was going away to England in the form of: (a) salaries, (b) savings, (c) pensions, (d) payments to British troops in India and (e) profits of the British companies which resulted in India's dependence on the British. Consequently, Britain became richer and India became poorer. In fact, the British Government was forced to appoint the **Welby Commission**, with Dadabhai as the first Indian as its member, to enquire into the matter. For the solution to India's problem of economic backwardness and unemployment, moderate leaders argued for industrialization of India with Indian capital. They also suggested reduction in expenditure, taxes and protection of Indian industries, reduction in land revenue, encouragement of cottage-industry and handicrafts.

2. **The creation of nationalist ideology and national consciousness:** The Moderates were able to create a wide national awakening among the people. Their common struggle against the British power and common demand for representation and recruitment of Indians in administration and Legislature brought unity among young leaders from North India to Southern India. Surendranath Benerjia called 'Nation in Making'. They popularized the ideas of democracy, civil liberties and representative institutions. These leaders had succeeded in getting the expansion of the **legislative councils by the Indian Councils Act of 1892**. Some Moderates like Ranade and Gokhale favoured social reforms. They protested against child marriage and widowhood.

Although the first 20 years of moderate politics were very important in terms of raising national consciousness and critiquing British economic policy. They never attempted organized movement against British authority. That is why a different group emerged within the Congress who had different methods and objectives, they are called extremist.

Constitutionalism to Extremist Strategies

The first twenty years of Congress (1885-1905) were dominated by the moderate leaders whose demand was limited to representation, reform and self-government rights. Their method was prayers, complaints and petitions to the British government. The failure of moderate politics provoked a reaction within the Congress circle referred to as the "Extremist". The leadership was provided by Bipan Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh in Bengal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab.

There are various reasons which explain the rise of extremism.

- a. **Differences in strategies/method:** A sense of competition developed among leaders within the Congress and new emerging leaders like Tilak started criticizing moderate politics and its achievement. Tilak was frustrated with the moderate's method. The social reforms started by the moderate leaders were influenced by the western liberalism which went against popular orthodoxy. In 1895, when the Poona Congress session proposed a

national social conference, Tilak objected to it. Therefore, the proposal was dropped. Tilak started religious congregations like Shivaji festival and Ganesh Utsav in Maharashtra to mobilise people for political purposes. For him, political independence was prior to social reform.

- b. **British Policies: Lord Curzon (1899-1905)** administration and his policies like the Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act (which reduced the number of elected representative), the Indian University Act, 1904 (which placed Calcutta University under central's control), Indian Officials Secret Amendment Act, 1904 (which restricted press freedom) frustrated the hope of educated elite.
- c. The last in the series was the partition of Bengal in 1905 which was directed to weaken the influence of Bengali nationalists. These policies of the British government compelled the leaders to rethink about the method and goals of the Indian freedom movement. Meanwhile, Japan defeated Russia in 1905 which gave a sense of pride and realization that the western power could be defeated.

Objective of Extremist:

The goal of extremists was swaraj. Bipan Chandra Pal believed that no self-government was possible under British paramountcy. For him, swaraj means complete autonomy and absolutely free from British control.

Aurobindo Ghosh conceptualised swaraj as absolute political independence. However, for most 'swaraj' meant self-rule within the parameters of British imperial structures.

Method/Strategies:

1. **Passive Resistance:** The radicalization was visible in the method of agitation. The method was passive resistance rather than prayers, complaints and petition. Passive resistance means boycott of foreign goods, institutions and violation of unjust law along with encouragement for swadeshi, national education, Akhara culture and Indian symbols.
2. **Nationalist culture and its dissemination:** The ideological inspiration of extremists was the emergence of new nationalist literature like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Anand Math, Bipan's 'Bande Bharat' and Tilak's 'Kesari'. They invoked the imagination of the golden past to arouse nationalists' passion. Historical leaders like Rana Pratap in Rajasthan and Shivaji in Maharashtra projected as national leaders.
3. **Mobilization of Masses:** Indeed, at this stage, while moderates wanted to develop India as a modern nation based on western liberal ideas and utilitarianism, the extremist projected India in terms of Indian culture and Hindu political ideology. It was essentially an imaginary idea. Leaders like Ghosh and Tilak believed to use Hindu mythology and history as means to reach masses and mobilize them. The moderate leaders did not

accommodate new emerging trends in Congress politics. Consequently, moderates and extremists separated their paths in the Surat session of Congress in 1907. The moderates rejected the extremist version of politics or vice-versa. The Congress politics weakened due to two Congress Party, one was led by Moderates and other by extremists which came together in the Lucknow session in 1915. With the advent of Gandhi in Indian politics, the Congress revived and transformed from an elite-based party to a mass party.

1b. The GANDHIAN PHASE: Mass Satyagraha-

Non-Co-operative Movement

Gandhi came to India in 1915 and was welcomed by the moderate leaders in the Congress. In 1916, a farmer and the Congress leader, **Raj Kumar Shukla** from Bihar invited Gandhi to give leadership in Champaran where farmers were protesting against British policy. In Bihar, there was a '**Teen Kathia System**' under which the farmers had to cultivate indigo and sell it to the British. The system was very oppressive and exploitative. Gandhi accepted the invitation and went to Bihar. He visited rural villages of Bihar and witnessed mass poverty. He organized farmers with the help of new young leaders like Rajendra Prasad and J.B. Kripalani, and launched a movement against the British. The British authority accepted the farmers' demand and it was a great success at Champaran. Few years later, Gandhi supported the Mill workers movement in Ahmedabad.

Like early liberals, Gandhi had a very strong belief in the British Government in the early phase of his struggle. Often he used to accuse the **Viceroy and his executive Council for injustice** in India. Therefore, when Britain was involved in the First World War against Germany, Gandhi went village to village and recruited an army for the British. He used to say 'jao aur swaraj lekar aao' (go and bring swaraj). He had hoped that the British government would grant autonomy status to India after the first world war which never happened.

In contrast to Indian expectation, the British government passed the Rowlatt Act in 1919 and it was a draconian law which allowed police to arrest anyone on the basis of suspicion. It was a great blow to the hope of Indians. There were protests all over India against the Rowlatt Act. Meanwhile, **General O' Dyer** killed more than three hundred people gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh. This incident compelled Gandhi to launch Rowlatt Satyagraha but soon he was arrested.

Gandhi's rise on the national scale however came only with **the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919** whose **immediate agenda was to make the government repeal the Rowlatt Act** which provided the government with arbitrary powers to deal with 'terrorism'. **According to Ravinder Kumar, a noted historian, the Rowlatt Satyagraha of 1919 was the first satyagraha which represented the 'classes rather than the masses' and resulted in the emergence of Gandhi as a dominant figure in Indian politics.**

Khilafat Satyagraha and Non-Cooperation: In the post-World War I, the British authority removed Khalifa of Turkey who was a symbol of the pan Islamic world. In India, Muslim leaders

started a movement against British authority and demanded restoration of the khalifa. Gandhi supported Khilafat movement in order to bring Hindu-Muslim together. He had a broader plan in his mind and that is Non-Cooperation movement. He thought to transform the Non-Cooperation movement to Civil Disobedience movement (which include not obeying the unjust law and non-payment of tax)

Non-Cooperation Movement: In a special session of congress held in September 1920, Gandhi's resolution on Non-Cooperation programme was approved. The senior leaders of Congress were not satisfied with Gandhi's idea but young leaders were very enthusiastic about the Non-Cooperation movement. The senior leaders always believed in Constitutional reform and lawful demand from the British authority. They had no experience of mass movement.

The programme of Non-cooperation were followings:

- a. Surrender of government titles.
- b. Boycotting of schools, courts and councils.
- c. Boycott of foreign goods.
- d. Encouragement of national school (swadeshi).
- e. Arbitration court.
- f. Promotion of Khadi

The Non-cooperation programme was intended to transform into a civil disobedience movement by including the programme like non-payment of taxes and not follow the unjust law on the British authority. Gandhi had a broader idea. He allowed the masses to be members of the Congress by paying 25 paise. The Congress party transformed itself into a mass party during the non-cooperation movement. Peasantry and farmers had great hope and they supported the movement. In addition, women also came forward and participated in the movement. The people started Prabhat Pheri (Morning march), singing bhajans, picketing liquor shops and burning of foreign clothes. Gandhi assured to bring Swaraj within a year. Although the movement was based on Satyagraha and non-violence but there were many small riots that took place like the Moplah revolt which annoyed Gandhi. In February 1922, there was violence in Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur city of Uttar Pradesh. Gandhi called-off his movement and said that people are not ready for the Satyagraha (non-cooperation) movement. He engaged himself in a **constructive programme**.

Gandhi's Constructive Programme

- a. Movement against untouchability;
- b. Programme for khadi;
- c. Protection of environment;
- d. Revival of organizational work;
- e. Village reconstruction;
- f. Removal of disability of women;
- g. Boycotting of foreign goods; and

h. Temperance.

Gandhi thought that all these activities will be incorporated in swaraj.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

Gandhi, since his release from the prison in 1924 remained aloof from direct politics and focused on constructive programmes. The Congress itself is divided among ‘no-changer’ and ‘pro-changer’. The former wanted the Gandhian way that is non-cooperation with the British but the later wanted to assume constitutional politics i.e., to enter into assembly. The constitutionalists like C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru established the Swaraj Party within the Congress.

The aim of the Swaraj party was to participate in the legislative council and weaken the government from within. But they did not achieve the desired result. There was a growing influence of young leaders under Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose who called themselves “socialist”. The “socialist” within the Congress like Nehru defined the Congress’s goal as full independence i.e., Poorna Swaraj and proposed to start Civil Disobedience movement to achieve the goal yet Gandhi was not fully prepared for that. He was engaged in preparing true Satyagrahi at Sabarmati Ashram under his constructive programme.

In 1930, Labour Party government came to Britain and Viceroy Irwin offered the Congress party for the Round Table Conference in order to examine the constitutional government in India. In January, 1931, Gandhi had made eleven demands and said that if the demand had not been met by March 11, 1931, then he would launch the Civil Disobedience Movement. Irwin was in no mood of compromise and hence, on March 12, 1931, Gandhi began historic Dandi March to the Gujarat seashore where on April 6, 1931, he publicly violated the salt law. The Dandi March attracted enormous publicity in India and abroad. The movement included illegal manufacturing of salt, boycott of foreign clothes, non- payment of revenue in the Ryotwari area, non-payment of chaukidari tax in zamindari areas, violation of forest laws in the central province, etc. The movement attracted mass support in Gujarat, U.P, Bihar, Bengal, Punjab, Assam, Orissa and coastal Andhra. It was largely a non-violent satyagraha. However, there were many violent activities which Gandhi ignored.

The movement received support from Indian business class, women, college students and peasantry. The working-class participation and support was non-existent except in Nagpur. British authority launched repression that witnessed thousands of Congress leaders behind the bar and gradually the movement declined by 1934.

Quit India Movement

1C. Militant and Revolutionary Strategy

The culture of violence as a mode of political protest was always alive in India even after the suppression of the revolt of 1857. There was an idea that by using violence means, including

individual killings of anti-Indian British Officials and their henchmen, Indians could be freed. They believed that the British had enslaved India by force, and therefore, force is the only way to throw out the British from India. They believed in the cult of violence as an article of their faith and were more than willing to make supreme sacrifice for the cause of our motherland. They have been described as militant revolutionary/nationalists.

In Maharashtra, Vasudev Balwant Phadke had gathered around him a band of Ramoshi and other backward classes and engaged them in dacoities to collect money for his ambitious scheme of armed revolt. He was caught in 1879 and deported to Aden where he died a lonely death. But the revolutionary zeal kept alive in Maharashtra through physical cultural movements like formation of youth clubs and akhara culture. The Chapekar brothers, Damodar and Balkrishna, killed W.C. Rand in 1897, the notorious chairman of the Poona Plague commission which was allegedly responsible for atrocities perpetrated by the soldiers. Both brothers were caught and hanged. They inspired the young generation for armed revolt. Their activities were supported by the newspapers like Kal. The traditions of arm revolt lingered on.

In Bengal, militant nationalism developed in the same way as in Maharashtra in the 1860s and 70s. The physical culture became a craze. It was promoted by Vivekanand and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in their philosophy. The real story of militant nationalism revived with the formation of four groups, namely, the Midnapur Society, the Atmonnati Samiti, Anushilan Samiti and a club of Gymnasium by Sarla Ghoshal.

The progress of Swadeshi movement (1905-06) brought an upsurge in secret society activities, A group within Anushilan samiti headed by Barindra Kumar Ghosh, Hemchandra Kanungo and Prafulla Chaki started a bomb manufacturing unit at Maniktala in Calcutta. All revolutionary ideas expressed in a weekly called "Yugantar ". The attempt in Muzaffarpur to kill magistrate Kingsford by Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki followed the arrest of the entire Maniktala revolutionary group and it was a kind of blow to revolutionary and militant activities in Bengal.

In terms of gains, the revolutionary movements (armed revolt against the British) achieved very little. The original idea was to prepare Indians for an open armed revolution. Aurobindo wrote several commentaries on Bankim's idea of Bande Mataram. He projected India as a living Goddess and said that it is a religious act to make Bharat Mata free from British control. In Maharashtra, B.G. Tilak and in Bengal, Bipin Chandra Pal did the same. Raksha Bandhan and Durga Puja were started to mobilize people and to establish co-operation among people to fight with the British power.

A new revolutionary activity started in Punjab and UP. Returning from North America where Punjabis had formed the Ghadar party, they engaged in a revolutionary movement against the British. They organized dacoities throughout north India to raise funds and in 1912, they plotted an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Viceroy Lord Harding.

The Komagata Maru case in which Ghadar Party members clashed with the British army. These all incidents inspired the masses.

The organized revolutionary movement by the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army founded by Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad and others inspired the young generation in India's freedom struggle. The British Authority brutally suppressed the armed revolt strategy of the national movement yet it remained a significant protest against British authority.

A big scheme of organizing armed revolt in the Indian Army with the help of Germany and Japan began to appear. Raj Bihari Bose and Subhash Chandra Bose were engaged in this project.

The Chittagong Armoury Raid: Led by Surya Sen and his associates, it targeted British authorities in Chittagong.

Conclusion-

Militant and revolutionary movements, though not ultimately successful, underscored the determination of Indians to free themselves from colonial rule. They added a layer of complexity to the broader Indian national movement, leaving a lasting impact on the struggle for independence.

1D. PEASANTRY AND WORKERS MOVEMENT

I. Peasants Movement

The Indigo plantation in Bengal and Bihar was exploitative. Dinabandhu Mitra has depicted the atrocities of planters in his play "Neel Darpan". Peasants revolted against the unjust system. However, it survived in few regions of Bihar that ended with Gandhi intervention in 1917. Peasant protest against oppression was not confined to Bengal only. Moplah peasants revolted against landlords and against the colonial state in Malabar region. They resisted rent enhancement.

In Maharashtra, peasants had another enemy to fight with and that was Sahukar (money lenders). In Deccan, peasants protested against land grabbing by the British. In Punjab, peasants launched a movement under the leadership of Baba Ram Singh and later the movement headed by Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh.

Tribal peasants also resisted landlordism and British forest Policy. For example, Santhal did armed revolt against the British and the Munda Ulgulan (1899) under the leadership of Birsa Munda who resisted against Diku (outsider) are the living examples of tribal peasants revolt in India.

Peasant and tribal revolts occurred in all parts of the country but they largely remained a localized movement due to the complex caste and class structure of agrarian society in India. It

had great regional variation. The series of peasant uprisings that took place throughout the 19th century and till independence challenged the hegemony of the colonial state. The INC and Gandhi tried to mobilise the peasants. INC mobilized peasants and workers for freedom from exploitation. Ranjit Guha, a noted subaltern perspective historian, argued that peasants supported the national movement but remained unable to speak for themselves.

II. Workers Movement

British colonialism paved the way to new industrialization and urbanization in India. New industries were established where working conditions of labour were harsh. Workers movement began in the Jute mill of Calcutta and Textile mills of Bombay. With the advent of World War I, there was a rise in the number of working classes who moved from village to city. The workers movement turned towards militancy in Bombay under the revolutionary *Girni Kamgar Union*. The major causes were price rise and the decline of real wages during the war period.

In 1919, the All-India Trade Union Committee was founded and it was headed by Lala Lajpat Rai. Working class fought for better working conditions and against discrimination and wage-cut. The method of protest was strike. There were a series of strikes in Bombay, Sholapur, Nagpur, Calcutta, Kanpur, Jamshedpur and in other cities.

With the establishment of Communist Party of India in 1925(CPI), workers united under the communist ideology and leadership. Renowned leader was Singaravelu, Joglekar, S.A. Dange, Dr. Bhupendra Dutta and V.V. Giri who were active in different parts of India. Workers often used small scale violence against industries management and their property. This is why Gandhi did not support the working- class movement's method.

The British authorities launched suppression against the working class movement. The Public Safety Bill and Traders Dispute Act of 1929, virtually banned strikes. In addition, working class leaders were arrested but the labour upsurge under the communist leaders did not die down. It continued till independence and beyond.

1F. Depressed classes's strategy:

The Charter Act of 1813 allowed Christian Missionaries to come to India and engaged in providing education and enlightenment. Missionaries started giving education to **non-Brahmanas and Ex- untouchables.** The British government also adopted **positive discrimination** for empowerment of non-Brahmin and what they called as Depressed Classes.

In response to Raj support, the depressed classes started supporting colonial rule and did not oppose it as the Congress did. They wanted social freedom in the first place. They wanted rid from the caste discrimination and equal respect for them in Indian society along with their due

shares in the government. Political freedom was their second priority. For Ambedkar, freedom from 'graded inequality' was necessary to get real freedom. Depressed classes had started different strategies than that of the congress one. They also started the congress version of nationalism and freedom.

The first response to the Congress notion of nationalism came from non- Brahmins. Jyotirao Phule and Savitabai Phule in Maharashtra and E.V. Ramaswami Naicker "periyar" in South India started criticizing the Congress party. They labelled Congress party as Shethji-Bhatji (Brahmin and Bania) party and accused Gandhi as pro-Brahmin and pro- Varnashrama dharma. Non-Brahmin movements like the self-respect movement in Tamil Nadu inverted the story of Ramayana to make Ravana an ideal Dravidian and Rama as an evil Aryan. The self-respect movement drew inspiration from Adi- Dravida intellectuals like Iyothee Thass and M. Masilamani, both wrote many articles against caste system and Indian nationalism while congress grew in size and power, the non- Brahmin movement became more radical and populist in its appeal. They boycotted Congress and publicly burned Manusmriti. ***M.S.S Pandian*** argued that the non-Brahman movement of south India demanded free and equal citizenship.

Dalit response to the Congress party and Indian nationalism was very much similar as non-Brahman movement. Initially, Christian Missionaries started working among Dalit communities and provided education. It created 'a new educated elite' within Dalit and new awareness was visible. It is often believed that one way to protest caste was conversion to Christianity but Christianity didn't liberate them because converted Dalits were appropriated back into the existing social structure of the society. Dalit started organized caste movement like Ezhavas or Iravas and Pulayas of Kerala, Nadars or Perraiah of Tamil Nadu, Mahars of Maharashtra, Chamars of Punjab, UP and MP, Balmikis of Delhi and Namasudras of Bengal not only against Brahmin-Bania dominance in society but also against the dominant version of nationalism.

There are two kinds of caste movements that took place during this period. First, the organized Dalit groups started appropriating upper caste symbols and practices like surnames, wearing of seared thread, participating in ritual ceremony and entering temples from where they were historically deprived. ***M. N. Srinivas, a noted sociologist, called this appropriation as 'Sanskritization'.*** The second response came from an organised Dalit group who started making claims for the rights of Dalits in the public sphere. They were claiming for **equal civil and political rights for depressed classes**. Dalit alienation from Congress politics and from nationalism was also the result of Congress apathy towards the question of caste and untouchability. Dalit leaders organised themselves and rejected the dominance of Brahmin-Bania.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar repudiated Hindu notion of religion and social hierarchy. He burnt Manusmriti in a public sphere. Ambedkar followed four strategies against caste-system: a) He organized conferences (Mahar conference); b) He published newspaper like Mooknayak, Janata, Bahiskrit Bharat; c) He launched Satyagraha like Mahad Satyagraha and d) he established an organization like All India Scheduled Caste Federation, Indian labour Party, and Indian

Republican Party. He took a very clear stand against Congress and demanded a separate electorate during the second Round Table Conference for depressed classes.

PART B: Perspectives on Indian National Movement: Liberal, Socialist and Marxist; Radical humanist and Dalit.

The idea of Nation and Nationalism in the West

Modern concepts like Nation and Nationalism evolved in the 19th and 20th century in Europe in the context of modernity, development of science and technology and industrial revolution which springs in the west.

What is the concept of Nation? A nation is a blend of cultural and political characteristics. It is a cultural entity- it means a group of people who speak similar language, practice the same religion and possess a shared common history. As the world is divided into territorial states, similarly, the world is divided into nations. It means a population possessing historical similarities, shared myths and historical memories, mass public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members who have a sense of belonging.

The concept of nation has emerged in Europe. German poet J. Herder is known as the 'father of cultural nationalism'. He said that a nation is a natural institution, self-evolved, an organic group characterized by a distinct language, culture, shared past and spirit. Each nation possesses the spirit of the people which reveals itself in songs, myths, distinct historical memories, legend, etc. Herder gave importance to language as the basis of the nation.

What is Nationalism? Nationalism is a sentiment, a sense of belongingness, political creed and a collective psychological construct. It is a creed which has been created through various values like shared imagination of culture, language, symbols (like Flag and National Anthem) and coexistence in the past in a specified territory. It is a claim that a particular territory exists as a nation and it should form the basis of political order.

In short, nationalism has two aspects: First, the political character of nationalism as an ideology defending the notion that the state and the nation should be congruent and its capacity to be a provider of identity for individuals conscious of forming a group based upon a common past and culture, attachment to a concrete territory. The power of nationalism emanates from its ability to engender sentiments to a particular community. Symbols and rituals play a major role in the cultivation of a sense of solidarity among the people.

Thus in order to understand the concept of nationalism:

- a. We must keep in mind that Nationalism is a sentiment that has to do with attachment to a homeland, a common language, ideals, values and traditions, a particular group with symbols as flag, songs which define it as 'different' from others. The attachment creates an identity and the appeal to that identity has a past and the power to mobilise the people.

- b. How a sentiment of attachment to a homeland and a common culture can be transformed into the political demand for the creation of a state; how is it possible to make this transition? A theory of nationalism has to deal with questions such as: how does nationalism use and legitimize the use of violence in its quest for the creation of a state?
- c. An important feature of nationalism is its to bring together people from different social and cultural levels. Nationalism is not merely an invention of the ruling classes to maintain the unconditional loyalty of the masses but also making believe that they have much in common that is more important than what separates them.

Liberal Perspective on Nation and nationalism

Ernest Gellner in his work "Nation and Nationalism" has argued that nation has evolved in expression of social and cultural mechanisms particular to modernity. It means a nation is a product of modern means of communication, administration and knowledge. Gellner explained the role of culture and cultural factors in evolution of nationalism or vice-versa. He said a nation is an organic, natural one and sometimes takes pre-existing culture and sometimes invent culture and turn them into a nation. Thus, Gellner has argued that it is not nation that creates nationalism rather it is nationalism which creates nation. In this process, there is homogenizing pressure on pre-modern culture and using them in transforming national culture.

Gellner links nationalism with capitalism and industrial society. He said that pre-modern societies were agricultural and structured by a network of feudal order, border and loyalty. Industrialization has promoted social mobility, self-striving and competition. People required a new source of culture in order to interact with each other and it was provided by nationalism and nation.

Marxist Perspective on Nations and Nationalism

Eric Hobsbawm argued that nationalism is a bourgeois ideology, an ally of capitalism. It unites the dominant class- the bourgeoisie. It is an invented tradition which has created false consciousness.

Benedict Anderson in his book "Imagined Community" argued that a nation is an imagined community. It exists in a mental image rather than a genuine community which requires face to face interaction. It is constructed through education, print capitalism and the process of political socialization. It is the ideology of the ruling class.

Nation and Nationalism in India

There is consensus among historians that India as a nation-state did not exist prior to the British Raj. Nationalism as a collective mental construct and consciousness grew gradually. It was largely a response to British imperialism and its policy of administration.

India has been a plural society with various forms of diversity such as region, language, religion, caste and ethnicity. The British government implemented a uniform law and institution to govern India. In response to symmetrical administrative power and control exercised by the British imperialism on the Indian Subcontinent, nationalism evolved as a reaction to British apathy. Consequently, nationalism or a sense of belongingness exerted by the educated elite of India, what Surendranath Banerjee called India as ‘**nation in making**’ in the late 19th century. It was enriched by various literature, art, song, slogans and a quest for freedom in colonial India. For example, Bankim's Anandamath and his popular line ‘Vande Mataram’, emerged as a symbol of the Indian nation. In addition, Abanindranath Tagore’s portrayal of ‘**Bharat Mata**’, a hindu goddesses wearing saffron coloured cloths and having four hands holding a manuscript, a mala, sheaves of rice, and a white clothes cerated nationalist feelings in the early 20th century and continued to influence nationalism in India. Freedom struggle and movement fulfilled the due gap for raising Indian nationalism.

The Indian National Movement was the biggest mass movement that India has ever seen. There was a great debate whether political activities taking place in India can be labelled as nationalism and mass-movement led by different leaders constitute Indian into a nation-state or not.

Beginning of the debate: Debate on India as a nation has started with British historians and administrators who considered “India as a geographical expression” rather than a nation. For instance, *Sir John Strachey*, a civil servant in his work “*India: its Administration and Progress*” argued that first and foremost we should know that India is not a nation. It was never a nation. Similar idea was proposed by *John Seeley* who argued that treating India as a nation would be an error. The historians of Cambridge School like Valentine Chirol argued that India is a multi-nation state rather than a nation.

First response to the British thought “India as a mere geographical expression” rather than nation came from early liberal moderate leaders like W.C Bonnerjee, Pherozeshah Mehta, M.G. Ranadey, Surendranath Banerjee, etc. They projected India as “*a nation in making*”. The early moderate leaders argued that there are nationalist ideology and national consciousness exist in Indian people. It was a reaction to British apathy towards India,

Moderate leaders did not oppose the British rule in India but opposed “Un British Rule” perpetrated by viceroy, his executive council and bureaucracy. They wanted more representation of Indians in the British administration. Their method was largely based on constitutional reforms, prayers and petitions.

Moderate leaders also criticised the economic exploitation of Indians by the East India Company (hereafter EIC). They projected EIC responsible for de-industrialisation of India. It means there were small-scale industries like craft, textile, etc. India was self-sufficient in terms of cloth production but very soon it became dependent on British products.

On the other hand, the British treated Congress as an organisation of elite minority and representing only sectarian interest. Lord Dufferin regarded congress as “microscopic minority”

In the post-moderate phase (1885-1905), response came from extremists like Aurobindo Ghosh, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal (popularly called as “Lal Bal Pal”) who asserted India as a “nation in spirit”. They equated “nation” with the term “Rashtra”, and asserted India’s freedom. Nationalist historians like R.C. Majumdar and Dr. Tara Chandra supported the liberal/nationalist perspective. They considered the Congress as a national organization. Sunil Khilnani in his book “Idea of India” argued that Indian nationalism was not homogeneous but a plural “a dhoti with endless fold”. Ram Chandra Guha says that India is an unnatural nation and different from the western perspective. it does not fit into European lands.

Different schools of Indian Nationalism

1. **Early nationalist school or liberal perspective on Indian nationalism:** Early nationalists studied the process of nation building in India. They focused on the supremacy of nationalist ideology and national consciousness. This national consciousness dominated over all other forms of consciousness. The awareness of the nation was a reaction to the British apathy and excesses. It was common on the Indian subcontinent and a feeling of patriotism developed. They talked about great Indian tradition. The earliest nationalist school was dominated by moderate leaders like Surendranath Banerjee, Pherozeshah Mehta, W.C. Banerjee, Ranadey etc. This school left the issue of inner conflict within Indian society and focused on Indian nationalism.
2. **Imperialist School:** Valentine Chirol argued that politicization of Indian society developed along the line of traditional social formation, like language, caste, religious communities etc. The British state has helped in promoting nationalism by creating institutions, giving western English education, and political representation. The western educated elite, for example, Bhadrak of Bengal, Chitpavan Brahmins of Maharashtra, Tamil Brahmins of Madras were the members of collective consciousness. The backward classes were not the part of it until Gandhi who recruited masses into Indian nationalism.
3. **Cambridge School:** It questioned the unified national movement in India. They have traced various local movements. They argued that imperialism in India was weak and it would not survive without the collaboration of Indian people. It also argued that nationalism in India was not so strong. British imperialism was dependent on collaborators and there was competition among the collaborators in order to take favours from the British government. These various interest groups among the collaborators started participating in local self- government. The British Government introduced elections in order to seek more participation from Indian people. Leaders sought more representation and other interests from British Raj. Their relationship with the British government was like a patron-client relationship. This school completely rejected nationalist school idea of national consciousness and explained Indian politics in colonial times on the basis of competition-collaboration syndrome. They believed that India is not

a nation but a collection of various interest groups. They are united by the centralised national administration created by the British government.

4. **Marxist Perspective on Indian Nationalism:** The exponent of the Marxist school are A.R. Desai, R.P. Dutta, Sumit Sarkar and Bipan Chandra. A.R. Desai in his work "The Social Background of Indian Nationalism" explained Indian nationalism. For A.R. Desai Gandhi was a nationalist bourgeoisie who represented the interests of upper-middle, rich and lower middle class.

Ranji Palm Dutta in his book "India Today" used an economic determinist approach to explain Indian nationalism. He sought to analyse the class- character of the Indian national movement. He also explained Indian nationalism in terms of economic development and industrial capitalism developed in colonial times. Dutta argued that 'India' as a nationalist ideology was the ideology of bourgeois leaders which served their own class interest and neglected the masses and even, in some extent betrayed them. Another exponent of this school is Sumit Sarkar who in his book 'Modern India' has argued that class and class- consciousness are analytical tools to be used more skilfully and flexibly in order to explain Indian nationalism. He recognized the legitimacy of the national movement but he said that there was internal tension within the national movement regarding class- interest. There were two levels of anti- imperial struggle: one was elite and other was populist.

Bipan Chandra in his work "India's Struggle for Independence" has argued that the Indian national movement was popular amongst the various classes. It was not exclusively controlled by the bourgeoisie. There were two types of contradiction: 1) contradiction between the interests of the educated elite and the British government; and 2) contradiction between the interest of the elite and of the masses. In the second contradiction, it was along the line of class but also along the line of caste and religious communities. When the national movement met progress, the second contradiction was compromised in the favour of the first one and in this way hegemony of nationalist ideology was established.

5. **Socialist Perspective:** The Indian national freedom struggle was dominated by socialist leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, S.C. Bose, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Jai Prakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohiya and Acharya Narendra Dev. Jawaharlal Nehru was influenced by Fabian Socialism. He regarded the Indian national movement as a mass movement for social revolution. His idea of nation was plural. It means he recognised different voices within Indian nationalism. He argued that the fruits of the Indian freedom struggle should go to the people of India. D.P.S.P in the constitution was his contribution and he declared socialist pattern of society as the sole aim of the congress. Jai Prakash Narayan was a Gandhian leader who gave the concept of total revolution. It means revolution in economy, society, technology and so on. He talks about seven kinds of revolution, namely, economic, social, political, industrial, ideological, cultural and intellectual. He

was in favour of de-centralisation of the economy and political power. Ram Manohar Lohiya regarded caste as a major problem in India. He gave a call to New Socialism. It means equal distribution of resources among people. He was in favour of universal adult franchise, Gandhian Technique of Civil Disobedience and the World Parliament.

6. **Radical Humanist Perspective:** M.N. Roy proposed the Radical Humanist perspective of Indian nationalism. Roy has argued the congress party was nothing more than an upper-middle class movement which has demanded mere constitutional reforms. He credited Gandhi with transforming the Congress into a mass-party. M.N. Roy tried to revolutionize congress through revolutionary ideology and a comprehensive economic programme. His hope was C.R. Das, but Roy soon became disillusioned with C.R. Das, and referred to him as a 'neo-constitutionalist'.

Roy said that the congress comprised three classes, namely, a) upper middle class; b) the lower middle class including small traders and c) petty intellectuals and workers and peasants. Roy concluded that the interest of the first two classes is not similar to the third one. But the third class plays a very important role in the national freedom struggle. This is the most revolutionary class and they should assume the leadership of the national movement. Roy gave the call for revolutionary action. He established communist Party of India and distributed pamphlets at the congress session in 1924 (Belgaum, presided by Gandhi). He attacked congress for reactionary ideas and old evolutionary nationalism. He proposed revolutionary nationalism.

Development of radical Humanism:

M.N. Roy gave primacy to the cultural transformation of India. He started a new renaissance movement intended to create a democratic state after the overthrow of the British empire. He opposed Fascism and supported a democratic decentralised form of state. In 1946, Roy convened a study camp in Dehradun which was attended by 182 leading members of the Radical democratic party. He explained his difference with Marxism and economic determinism. He gave 22 theses called as basic tenets of new humanism.

Defects of Marxism: In the later period of his life, M.N. Roy rejected Marxism and economic determinism. He said that man has created an economy rather than an economy creating man. He said that economy does not constitute the whole shape of a community but it is philosophy, spirit and reason. He said that dictatorship of the proletariat is a negation of freedom.

Tenets of new Humanism: a) Political aspects of new humanism: He said that new humanism in terms of politics is democracy organised from below. Power should be vested in the hands of people. Roy resented political parties and party democracy. He gave the idea of radical democracy which would be through the formation of a local people's committee. He opposed the USSR's version or the UK's version of parliamentary democracy. He supported the right to recall. 2) Economic aspects of new

humanism: He supported a co-operative economy in which production shall be carried collectively. He said economic change should take place from below. 3) Philosophical aspect: Roy favoured cultural transformation. He was a staunch supporter of freedom, truth, secular morality and reason. His idea was based on individualism. 4) Social aspects: He said change should occur from below. He was in support of an open society where individuals can exercise their rights and liberty. They can examine the new humanism from time to time.

7. **Subaltern Perspective on Indian nationalism:** The term 'subaltern' is coined by Italian revolutionary Marxist Antonio Gramsci in his 'Prison Notebook' to describe the people from the below (peasant and workers) who were subject to the hegemony of another, the powerful ruling class.

In early 1980s, Ranjeet Guha along with Gautam Bhadra, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Partha Chatterjee, David Hardimen and David Arnold adopted the term subaltern in attempt to 'rectify the elitist bias' towards research and academic work in South Asian Studies.

Subaltern history of nationalism is the 'history from below' in terms of caste, class, gender and ethnicity. Previously historical research and study of nationalism dominated by elitism as Ranjit Guha observed that 'the historiography of Indian nationalism has been dominated by elitism'. It was heavily influenced from Eurocentric or nationalist elitism, consequently, neglected the contribution of the masses like peasants, dalits, workers, women, non-dominant communities and their sacrifice to achieve India's freedom.

Subaltern historians used the Gramscian notion of 'hegemony' to explain Indian nationalism. Ranjeet Guha writes 'Indian nationalism is a hollow nationalism of the elite', and 'real nationalism is the nationalism of the poor masses that is of subaltern'. He argued that there was a structural dichotomy between elite nationalism and the nationalism of the masses. Both the movement lived together in complete separation and with autonomous distinct consciousness. Subaltern participated in the national movement initiated by the elite but they failed to speak for themselves. Consequently, the elite captured all the fruits of national movement.

The subaltern school has been criticized for presenting an overly romanticized view of subaltern resistance, and for its focus on agency and identity at the expense of structure. Social theorists like **Vivek Chibber** argued that the Subaltern school tended to overlook the way in which social and philosophical structures directed agency of subaltern groups. Sumit Sarkar, an early adherent of the Subaltern School, later dissented with subaltern historiography.

8. **Dalit Perspective on Indian National Movement:** Dalit had a different view on Indian nationalism and 'India as a nation' than the Congress. The Congress proposed a rainbow vision of nation, for instance, Gandhi called India as a 'civilizational nation'. In opposition to Congress' view, depressed classes, later on, known as Scheduled Caste or Dalit rejected the congress' or Gandhi's version of nationalism. Gandhi termed them as Harijan.

The depressed classes faced complex historical injustice from centuries by the hand of upper castes. They were also termed 'panchamas', 'Ati-shudras' or 'chandalas'. Their social rank was described at birth and it was directly linked to religious text (Manusmriti). It was based on the notion of purity and pollution. Being placed as polluted, they were at the bottom of the society and remained deprived from education and opportunities.

The Charter Act of 1813 allowed Christian Missionaries to come to India and engaged in providing education and enlightenment. Missionaries started giving education to non-Brahmanas and Ex-untouchables. The British government also adopted positive discrimination for empowerment of non-Brahmin and what they called as Depressed Classes.

The first response to the Congress notion of nationalism came from non-Brahmins. Jyotirao Phule and Savitabai Phule in Maharashtra and E.V. Ramaswami Naicker "periyar" in South India started criticizing the Congress party. They labelled Congress party as Shethji-Bhatji (Brahmin and Bania) party and accused Gandhi as pro-Brahmin and pro-Varnashrama dharma. Non-Brahmin movements like the self-respect movement in Tamil Nadu inverted the story of Ramayana to make Ravana an ideal Dravidian and Rama as an evil Aryan. The self-respect movement drew inspiration from Adi-Dravida intellectuals like Iyothee Thass and M. Masilamani, both wrote many articles against caste system and Indian nationalism while congress grew in size and power, the non-Brahmin movement became more radical and populist in its appeal. They boycotted Congress and publicly burned Manusmriti. **M.S.S Pandian** argued that the non-Brahman movement of south India demanded free and equal citizenship.

Dalit response to the Congress party and Indian nationalism was very much similar as non-Brahman movement. Initially, Christian Missionaries started working among Dalit communities and provided education. It created 'a new educated elite' within Dalit and new awareness was visible. It is often believed that one way to protest caste was conversion to Christianity but Christianity didn't liberate them because converted Dalits were appropriated back into the existing social structure of the society. Dalit started organized caste movement like Ezhavas or Iravas and Pulayas of Kerala, Nadars or Perraiah of Tamil Nadu, Mahars of Maharashtra, Chamars of Punjab, UP and MP, Balmikis of Delhi and Namsudras of Bengal not only against Brahmin-Bania dominance in society but also against the dominant version of nationalism.

There are two kinds of caste movements that took place during this period. First, the organised Dalit groups started appropriating upper caste symbols and practice like surnames, wearing of seared thread, participating in ritual ceremony and entering temples from where they were historically deprived. This is called '**Sanskritization**' by a noted sociologist **M.N. Srinivas**. The second response came from an organised Dalit group who started making claims for the rights of Dalits in the public sphere. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar repudiated Hindu notion of religion and social hierarchy. He burnt Manusmriti in a public sphere.

Dalit alienation from Congress politics and nationalism was also the result of Congress apathy towards the question of caste and untouchability. Dalit leaders organised themselves and rejected the dominance of Brahmin- Bania. Ambedkar followed four strategies against caste-system: a) He organized conferences (Mahar conference); b) He published newspaper like Mooknayak, Janata, Bahiskrit Bharat; c) He launched Satyagraha like Mahad Satyagraha and d) he established an organization like All India Scheduled Caste Federation, Indian labour Party, and Indian Republican Party. He took a very clear stand against Congress and demanded a separate electorate during the second Round Table Conference for depressed classes. When the communal award was recognized by granting a separate electorate to depressed classes, Gandhi went on 'Fast-unto-Death' to get it revoked. Gandhi requested Ambedkar to leave the demand of the separate electorate for the sake of the nation's unity. Ambedkar replied to Gandhi: "Bapu, where is my country?" Ambedkar meant Dalit has no nation. Finally, an agreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar, known as Poona Pact, provided reservation to scheduled castes. **G. Aloysius** in his book "**Nation and Nationalism**" has argued that nationalism as an ideology and consciousness, as claimed by the Nationalist, were absent among Dalits. Their prime concern was social freedom and India as a nation evolved without consciousness of nationalism for Dalits.

Partha Chatterjee view on Indian Nationalism:

Partha Chatterjee in his book '**Nation and its Fragments**' argued that nationalism in India is different from Europe. Chatterjee argues that nationalism in India is a derivative discourse from the west. It developed through 3 phases:

1. **Moment of departure:** It refers to when the educated elite developed national consciousness. They constructed it through enlightenment and Indian renaissance movement i.e., socio-religious reform and assertion against British Raj.
2. **Moment of manoeuvre:** It is a stage when nationalism is constructed through mass culture and movement. For example, the Gandhian movement.
3. **Moment of arrival:** It is a stage when nationalism has become normal for all and power has rationalised. E.g., Independence of India.

Conclusion

Additional Reading:

1. Chandra, Bipan, Mridula Mukherjee, Aditya Mukherjee, Sucheta Mahajan and K N Panikkar (2016). India's Struggle for Freedom. Penguin Random House: New Delhi (Chapter 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 22)
2. Bandyopadhyay, Shekhar. 2007. From Plassy to Partition. Orient BlackSwan: New Delhi. (Chapter 4 and selected chapter)

Question for Practice

Previous Year Question

POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE

1. Trace the role of militant and revolutionary movements in Indian national movement. (2020/15)
2. National movement in India was anti-imperialist and increasingly radical in its socio-economic and political programmes. Discuss. (2019/20)
3. The Revolt of 1857 was a 'sepoy mutiny' or 'first war of independence'. Discuss. (2018/10)
4. The success of Mahatma Gandhi lay in transforming both political and non political movements into a unified nationalist movement. Discuss. (2017/10)
5. Differentiate moderate nationalism from extremist/militant nationalism in terms of their objectives and means. (2017/15)
6. Comment on Satyagraha as a strategy in the Indian national movement. (2015/10)
7. Explain how the peasant movement promoted nationalist ideas during the struggle for Indian independence. (2014/15)

1b PERSPECTIVES ON INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

1. Analyse the Marxist perspective of the nature of Indian National Movement. (2021/10)
2. Discuss the role of socialists in Indian National Movement. (2020/10)
3. Discuss the Dalit perspective on Indian national movement. (2019/10)
4. Critically examine the Radical Humanist perspective on Indian National movement. (2016/10)